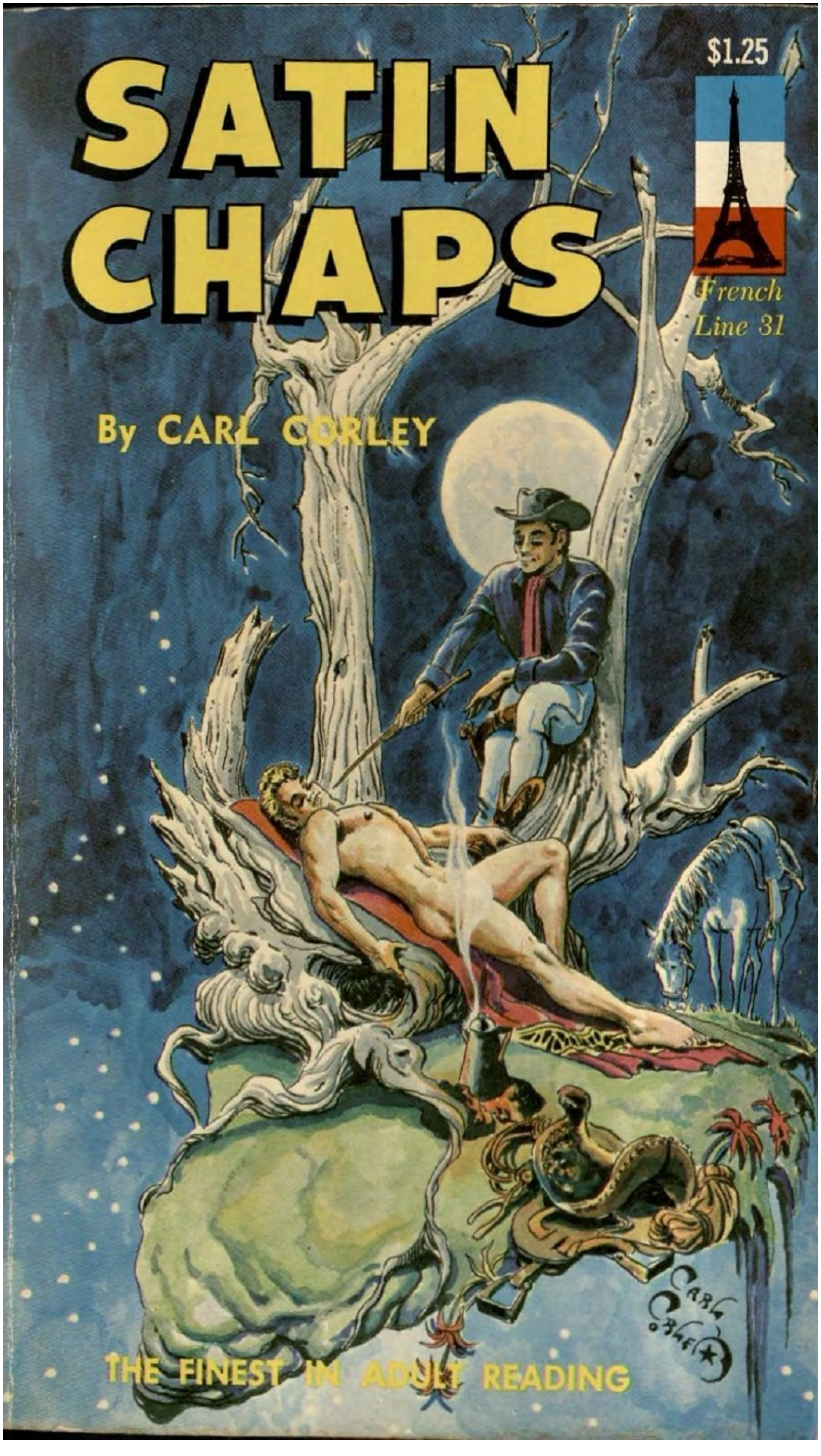


SATIN CHAPS

By CARL CORLEY

$1.25
French Line 31

THE FINEST IN ADULT READING

“

him,
live

“

bun
han

R

trim
his

“

with
wha
cut-
had
over

Don't be mad!" Ritt cried, reaching out to
. "Please—just this one night, and I can
on the memory of it for the rest of my life."

Never," Toye replied icily, "Show me the
khouse. I'll sleep with the drovers and cow-
ds."

itt's lips formed an ugly sneer, his neatly-
med mustache was like a whip-lash across
sullen face.

Go ahead, then," he growled bitterly. "Go in
that mob of degenerates. Maybe that's
t you need. Let them break you in, like them
hroats in the saloon would have done if I
't been there to protect you, stand guard
your precious tail!"

SATIN CHAPS

BY
CARL CORLEY

A PEC
FRENCH-LINE NOVEL

Copyright © 1968 by Publishers Export Co., Inc
P.O. Box 20127
San Diego, California 92120

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, without express permission from the publisher in writing.

Printed in the United States of America

E
12mo
#5448

hapter One

Toye Bell, standing on tiptoe, his five-foot-four height barely reaching the circular porthole, looked out on Caddo Lake as the sternwheeler *Alida* was moored at Swanson's Landing at Jefferson, Texas.

He was naked.

The evening sun, streaming in bright floods that beautiful April spring of 1858, bathed the richly-furnished stateroom with dappled splashes of gold, the wine carpet, the mahogany panelled walls, the blood-red leather chairs, the ebony statues, the teardrop lamps. the whiskey glasses, he sparkling decanters, and Toye's amber complexion, dazzling, provocative.

As he stood before a full-length mirror admiring his reflection before preparing to disembark, [illegible] arveled at the way the light played along his shoulders and thighs, over his small, flat belly, and rounded buttocks. His long blond hair, in the sun rays streaming through the portholes, was the rich, ripe color of wheat. The thick, curly nest of hair around his organ and testicles resembled wheat too. It began at his dimpled naval and widened to where his smooth, round thighs forked. With an animal pride he glanced at his organ reflected in the mirror, noted how huge it looked dangling there between his legs, like a young stallion's. His testicles were like enormous gourds in their sack of thin, translucent skin. He was proud of his physique, the masculine beauty of his nakedness. He had, unlike most men, an awareness of his good looks. He had a fine bone structure, and hard layers of muscles and sinews despite his smallness of stature, his one hundred and twenty-five pounds. For all of his twenty-four years he had lived in the open, under a Texas sky, riding, eating regularly swimming in the Sabine river, tussling with other boys, bronco-breaking, branding cattle, roping longhorns, cutting bulls and playing hooky from school in Dallas. He was at present in full flower, at the high tide of his life, overflowing with vigor and vitality. Every part of him, brain and body, nerve tissue and fiber, was keyed to the most exquisite pitch. And between all these parts there was a perfect equilibrium and adjustment. His muscles were super-charged with vitality, and always, when angered or sensuous, they snapped into play sharply, like steel springs, Life streamed through him in a splendid flood, glad and rampant, until it seemed that it would burst him asunder in sheer ecstasy and pour forth over the world.

His father had once said: "Toye, you're like a strutting bantam in the barnyard, a cocky galoot, but you got stallion's blood in your veins and with that branding poker of yourn you'll plant your seeds deep and rich in some filly's belly and sire thoroughbreds with stamina and strength." The old man had added: "Kinda hate to see you go at some innocent gal. I'd feel sorry for the poor unfortunate lass . . . like watching a bronco buster taming a wild-un with a spade bit, instead of a smooth edged hackamore."

Toye had always drunk up flattery like a derelict going for booze. He heard "the owl hoot" whenever he was being praised, but females meant nothing to him. In fact, less than nothing. Girls would eye him . . . goggle at his handsome good looks, his reckless air, his devilish green eyes, pursuing him in a way his mother would have called wanton. Yet he was always unaware of their glances or disinterested.

His love was in his work, the trade his father had handed down to him, that of leather tooling, saddle making, trappings for beautiful sorrels and walking horses, the gilded artistry of hand-tooled leather for shows, fairs, parades, circus. At the thought his eyes automatically glanced at the opened box on the table where he kept his tools; knives for wood pegging, for brass nailing, for steel-shanking, sharp stillettos for gore vents, for the fancy curlecues and fretwork that went into the making of beautiful embossed saddles and bridles.

Giving his reflection a last glance, he took a bottle from his luggage, an emerald decanter shaped in the image of George Washington, which contained orange peel and vinegar. He doused it on his chest and armpits, where the coarse, brown hair grew in profusion, and around his crotch, skinning back his organ in an affectionate caress, causing every nerve in his body to tingle maddeningly.

He loved to play with himself, something about it went with pride, animal masculinity, and he carried with him wherever he went numerous bottles of cologne. Sweet smells were a fetish with him, though unknowingly, and to rub down his body with these rapturous scents usually caused him to get an erection. He collected in bottles shaped like seahorses, bunches of grapes, owls, lanterns, horses hooves, dueling pistols, and two like Mr. Pickwick and Carrie Nation. All were of hand blown glass, varied in color and in the fragrances they contained.

Pouring some of the cologne into his hand, he sniffed it lovingly, and as he did so felt his organ slowly rising, like a rutting ram ready for battle. Delightful sensations flooded through his every nerve and sinew.

In that instant there was a knock on his stateroom door and, before he had time to snatch a towel to cover his nakedness the door opened a crack and a man stuck his head inside.

"Oh! Sorry to intrude," he said with a shaky voice, his eyes going over Toye's body with a serpent's glance, "I was informed by the captain that 108 was the stateroom of Mr. Toye Bell."

"I am Toye Bell."

"Oh," the man sounded surprised. "I was expecting someone much older. You are the man who is the leather expert, are you not?"

"I am the one," Toye answered, picking up a scarlet towel and holding it in front of him. "Come on in. Don't just stand there with the door wide open. I'm naked, you know."

"I can see that," the man remarked, and his black eyes turned to molten liquid as they caressed Toye from head to foot. "A beautiful form, I must say. You look like you have been dipped in warm wax. That skin of yours! That complexion! Many women would envy you of that. But none of them, I imagine, could wear it so well as you, without self-consciousness."

He came on into the room, shut the door, and thrust out a hand.

"I am Ritt Cameo, the man who sent you the telegram to come here to Jefferson."

Toye shook his hand, carelessly dropping the towel. The man glanced at his crotch.

"How many saddles do you want me to make?" Toye asked, noticing the man's glance, but thinking nothing of it. All men were basically curious of other men's sexual potential, if for no other reason than rivalry.

"Only one," he replied, as his expression lit up pleasantly. "I own a white Arabian. I must confess he is my pride and my joy, in fact my very heart. I want a black saddle tooled that will match his virile beauty, something tooled so intricately and of such original design and craftsmanship there will be no other like it. Plenty of silver studs interworked, and a few rubies which I have collected over the years."

Toye looked at him in surprise.

"You brought me all the way from New Orleans to tool only one saddle?"

The man smiled warmly.

"You will be paid the price of twenty saddles, if your workmanship is as good as your reputation as a leather tooler."

"You will be pleased," Toye said with inner satisfaction. And he actually looked at the man for the first time, carefully studied him.

He was an imposing man, around thirty five, huge of frame, broad of shoulder, graceful as a panther. His hair was long, crow-black, Indian-straight, with long sideburns and squared off in back, curling over his white, lace-frilled collar. A neatly trimmed mustache cut a startling black line above his lips, lips that when he smiled showed even white teeth, and his glowing black eyes were like twin flames in a dark world. Elegant in his dress, with a Fox Stetson hat in his huge, cameo-ringed hands, dove gray gloves, a tailored suit of the finest gray linen, black silk cravat and waistcoat, a diamond stickpin and dangling watch fob, he was like an illustration out of Harper's Bazaar, an ad out of the Dallas Times.

"I couldn't wait to meet you," Ritt said, fingering the brim of his hat. "That is why I came aboard as soon as the *Alida* docked. Anxious for you to get started. I knew you were new in these parts so I brought an extra bronc. As soon as we've eaten we'll ride over to Four-Mile-Branch."

"Where's that?" Toye asked.

"A few miles from here, north of Jefferson. Its the make-up point for wagon trains. I'm sure you've heard of it."

Toye shook his head.

"I don't recall."

"There is a foundry and factory there, where the Kelly Blue Plow is manufactured. The famous plow that made Texas, as they say."

"Oh," Toye stammered, surprised. He reached for his jeans.

"No hurry to get dressed," Ritt said, coming closer. "The *Alida* will be docked until tomorrow." He gave Toye a sensuous glance, his black eyes dancing. "Do you always go around like that?"

"I like going naked . . . buck-ass," Toye answered, "I always do when I'm alone. Feel free, uncaged, wild and free as the Texas skies."

"That's a nice way to feel," Ritt replied. His eyes locked on Toye's crotch, making him feel uncomfortable. "Reminds me of the slave trade in Jamaica, those big, shiny blacks walking around naked, their instruments dangling to their knees, like cobras, their seeds swinging like melons in a wet sack. Have you ever seen a slave auction?"

"No," Toye answered. "But I've heard Papa tell about them when he lived in Vicksburg. At one time he managed the cotton warehouses."

"They are a sight to behold," Ritt elaborated, "They bring them out together, both males and females, and they are all naked. Their bodies have been greased with lard so they'll shine and they are auctioned in much the same way as horses. Many of them are fresh from the bush country of Africa and have to be chained. But the young males look as though they have been carved from black marble. And they all have such great breeding powers. The auctioneers weigh their seeds by lifting them with their hands . . . like this."

He took Toye's testicles in his hand, lifted and let them balance by their own weight.

Toye's face turned to crimson.

"Embarassed?" Ritt asked.

"I've never had anyone touch me before," Toye answered, feeling a little ashamed, and awkward.

"You've got nice ones," Ritt praised, looking down at them in his hand. "They're heavy, solid, like a young colt's." He went on to explain. "Once the auctioneer has weighed their seeds, he examines their breeding tool, pushes back the film of skin to see if the head is harpoon-shaped." He took hold of Toye's organ, skinned it back, rubbed his thumb around the rim of the head. "If this base portion is thick, protrudes out," he went on to explain, "like the rim of a mushroom, it lends itself to greater tension in both the male and female, which brings out the finest in their copulation. Their sperm then is richer, which produces healthier children." He studied Toye's organ, examining it from tip to hilt. "You're well equipped, Toye. You have an enormous tool for one of your height and weight. It's nicely formed, with good, throbbing veins and firm, spongy substance. The opening, too, is large, which means you give out a volume of sperm."

At Ritt's hold on his organ, bringing new, thrilling sensations throughout Toye's body, he could not help getting an erection. This both stimulated and embarrasssed him. He wanted to push the man's hand away, yet he wanted to prolong this delightful sensaton. So he just stood there, rooted to the carpet, his legs a little spread, his hands on his hips.

"It don't take you but a minute to get ready, does it?" Ritt said, his face, also, inflamed with the passion of sex deviation.

"No sir," Toye replied, his voice trembling. "But I've never had anyone playing with my teasing rod before." (he was referring to those carved, polished poles used by breeders to tease a mare into submission before the stallion mounts her). "I'm not . . . not used to this kind of set-up."

"Don't it feel good, Toye, to be fondled?"

"I want to put on my clothes."

"As you say," Ritt commented politely, backing away. "But just the same, I'd like for you to know that I feel you're just the finest young boy I've ever run across. You're like Ganymede, successor to Hebe as cupbearer of the gods."

"Who was he?" Toye asked, completely dumbfounded.

Ritt smiled.

"A beautiful boy, Toye, just like you. A boy to be admired and loved and sought after." He said this last sadly, hanging his handsome head. And when he raised his eyes to Toye they looked troubled, burning with a mysterious, uncanny light. "There is something about a beautiful boy, Toye, that draws the eyes and heart of every man and woman. Looking at you unhusked, your glory exposed, your smooth manhood, your glowing youth, I have the strange feeling that you are one of those boys, Toye. So beautiful you cause women to commit suicide and drive men mad, for you possess something we want but cannot have, really, and that in itself is a form of madness."

"I don't understand, sir," Toye said, and he spoke the truth. The man talked in riddles, and he possessed neither the mind nor the inclination to pursue an abstraction.

"Your kind never does," Ritt went on to explain, his voice trailing, as if he regretted what he was saying. "Your kind is like an animal, full of life, breathing, living life to the hilt; never knowing nor realizing the full measurement of your beauty, the burning fire, the unease you will cause in others, hurting them, and going on to hurt others again and again without knowing what and how your body and spirit compels. Everyone who has ever met you has liked you, I am certain, and you will hurt each alike, and you will learn not a single lesson from any that you have hurt, destroyed."

"I don't mean to hurt anyone," Toye replied, still puzzled and somewhat annoyed by this stranger predicting his life.

Ritt gave him a kind, thoughtful look.

"I know you don't mean to hurt anyone, and that's the rub. You're so vivacious, so full of life, so innocent, so thoughtless of other people's feelings. But perhaps that is man's fault and not yours. Men have treated you with kindness, women have flattered you and flirted, all in their own fashion bidding for your body, your heart. There are men like you ... or, should I say, youths like you, born for other's pleasure and sorrow, born too beautiful to be men ... yet so lovable no one can resist your innocent temptations."

"Is all this so awful?"

"No," he answered, and shrugged again. "Or, rather it is both wonderful and awful. You, Toye, are like a sip of brandy. You go to a man's head. A man like me, anyway, who worships youth and beauty. It is difficult to adore your kind, the Ganymedes of this world from a distance. And oh, how wonderful if you could be adored only from a distance, without that lust of wanting to touch you ... that's the all-too-damnable truth."

Toye looked at him out of the corner of one eye, and hurriedly slipped into his jeans and boots and red silk shirt.

"You mean, Mr. Cameo, that you want to . . . to do things to me . . . like those silly fops in New Orleans?"

Ritt swallowed hard, looked out one of the porthole for a tense moment, as if he saw something outside other than a long line of other sternwheelers. The *Alida* rocked enough in the waters of Lake Caddo to cause the lamp hanging from the ceiling to swing to and fro like the pendulum of a clock. He turned then and looked at Toye, a long thoughtful look.

"I am not a fop, as you term them—men like that . . ." he said at last, his bland face furrowed with tiny wrinkles, his lips going down at one corner which gave to his mustache a peculiar slant. "But meeting you today, here in this lovely room, seeing you for the first time, and naked, some strange ecstasy has come over me, has invaded my otherwise docile senses. Perhaps, if I had seen you completely clothed at first, then I might not have come to possess this idea, this new delightful sensation. But when I first opened the door and saw you standing here in this room, the light from outside falling over your nakedness, my mind came to think on things like gods and Mount Olympus and shadowy, beautiful beings like Apollo, Dionysus, Bellerophon. Diomedes. Yes, Toye Bell, I do want you."

Putting on his black Stetson hat with the curled brim, and tying the black silk kerchief about his neck, Toye studied for a moment quietly, as neither spoke. The only sounds were from negro roustabouts shouting to one another on the upper deck, and the lapping of muddy water against the wooden hull.

It was true, Toye reasoned, what Ritt had said. He was not like other men. Though he looked the same, was well built, hard, callous, crude to a degree, they sought him out from time to time, a thing they did not do with other youths his age. Allowing his memory to scan his past, he realized now for the first time . . . since Ritt had put it into words . . . that men had actually paid court to him, in their own peculiar fashion, had teased, petted him, had tried to fondle him, though playfully these gestures had appeared surfacely; tusseling with him, grabbing his naked legs when in swimming, pinching him on the behind, taking his hand uncessarily, doing small favors they knew he would like, even giving him gifts. Before he had not noticed these overt signs of affection. Now, hearing a similar expression of them from Ritt, this learned man, and cosmopolitan erotic, they rose to the light of his mind. These other men too had wanted him; in a way he could not understand, for what usage he could not comprehend. Just what they would do with him, if he complied, he did not have the vaguest idea. This was an era of action, not speaking. Men usually took what they wanted, and the relations between one being and another were rarely if ever a matter for discussion. It was an era of raw crudity—of selfishness and lawlessness, of raw meat, raw nerves, of raw head and bloody bones—as well as trigger-finger tempers and gunfighting and slavery and murder. It was a dangerous world, this world of the Southland, a frontier land, of Negro slaves fresh from the Congo, of Indians still on the warpath, of threats of war between the northern and the southern states, when wagon trains were still going west, and as yet no railroad had come so far east as Jefferson. A pioneering people. People fresh from their foreign homelands, a civilization created from a mix which included pardoned murderers and hardened criminals who had their choice of being hanged or of building this new world.

And as Toye faced this stranger from across this richly furnished stateroom, noticed his broad shoulders, how his animal muscles played beneath his fine linen coat, his black hair so primitive, his dashing air, his reckless black eyes, he suddenly felt powerless in his presence; felt for the first time a victim of this savage new world in which, to this moment, he had been little more than a mere spectator. Now he was suddenly a part of this crudeness, this blood-red rawness, the marrow of the fresh killed bone.

Toye suddenly knew, too, that someday some man would take him for whatever pleasures he sought in him, and that he would be helpless to defend his body, his dignity, his innocence. He thought of this possibility now as he eyed Ritt Cameo in the evening light, this still room, his voice trembling as he said: "It'll do you no good to want me, Mr. Cameo, for no man is ever going to touch me, no sir. Nobody has ever touched me, man nor woman, and nobody is going to, meaning no offense to you, sir. I came here to Jefferson to make you a saddle, and that's all it's going to be. If you want me to be your friend I'll be your friend, but nothing more . . . not this other, whatever that is . . ."

Ritt turned the hat in his hands, looked sad, defeated. Then he smiled a slow, drowsy smile, making him to Toye an all the more persuasive personality, a mystery he wanted to solve but dared not.

"Very well, Toye," he said at last, putting on his hat and gloves. "I guess I admire you in a way for turning me down. At least I have one consulation. It leaves me with the one pleasure that no other man has ever touched you. Thank God for that."

"And they're not ever gonna." Toye said

faintly, as though he did not believe his own declarations. "I swear it."

"So ... you swear it," Ritt said, somewhat bitterly. "But in the meantime I'll keep a sharp eye out for your other obvious suitors. And live with the hope that while you're turning them down you may someday surrender to me."

"Never!" was Toye's reply.

"We'll see," Ritt added.

"I'll call the saddle deal off then," Toye persisted.

Ritt caught him by the hand and laughed, the sound echoing in the still room. "Come, boy, let's eat. I'm famished."

Chapter Two

The town of Jefferson was bustling when Toye and Ritt Cameo went topside on the sternwheeler "Alida." Negro porters, loaded with luggage, moved to and fro across the shallow gangplank, late passengers hurried along the narrow outer decks, roustabouts were busy unloading assorted drygoods, cases containing shoes and boots, cases of hats—mostly western —clothing, books, saddlery, woodware, stoves from the famous S. F. Mosely Company, goods alotted to the laborers for the Vicksburg and Shreveport railroads, goods of every description from the M. Steinlien & Company, bales of cotton, buffalo, hides, pelts, and lumber.

On either side of the "Alida" were moored the Lama, the John S., The Pitser Miller, the Music, the Antelope, the Caddo Belle, and the Bell

Gates, either taking on or disgorging their lading of supplies. Negro slaves were everywhere, following on the heels of their masters, carrying bags, luggage, hat boxes, lunch baskets; supporting parasols above the heads of their mistresses in order to ward off the hot April sun. Cowpokes in jeans and boots and wide brimmed stetsons peopled the streets, some in chaps and spurs, together with men in morning coats and canes, farmers in dingy overalls, ladies in elaborate flowing gowns, old slaves, self-confident northern Negroes, women sparkling with diamonds, women in cheap, garish attire common to the streets, the saloons, the bordellos. Horses, ridden by drovers, cowhands, moved irresistibly through the dirt streets, going in and out among the many pedestrians; and buggies and open carriages hurried up and down the long lanes between the buildings as if on a parade, the brightly painted wheels churning up dust.

Across Caddo Lake Toye could see the smoking spires of Shreveport, Louisiana, the numerous boats on the lake, moving southward by way of the Red River, on to the Mississippi River which would flush them out at New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico. There was such a hustle and bustle, hundreds of people everyone rushing, an air of speculation and excitement pervading the wharfs, the streets, Port Monterey, and Jeem's Bayou that Toye liked the place immediately, and questioned Ritt about its history.

"It was established around 1836 over a barrel of whiskey," Ritt related, almost proudly, as they stood on the open deck and glanced north where the town proper sprawled and at the little ferry crossing Big Cypress Bayou. "Citizens had agreed to meet at the site and discuss laying out a town. But when they arrived they found that some enterprising fellow had erected a rough pole shack containing a barrel of whiskey and a dipper to be used to dispense the whiskey, so Jefferson was born."

But actually, unkown to them both, Jefferson was founded along the western edge of a no-land between Louisiana and Texas, former colonies of France and Spain respectively. The French and Spanish for many years had an unwritten understanding of their borders, leaving an area nearly a hundred miles long as a buffer zone between the two colonies. This no-man's land extended from Oklahoma territory due south to the Sabine River, then along each side of the river to the upper Gulf Coast.

Into this lawless vacuum of wilderness came a breed of men who would change the fate of Texas ... men Toye would come to know and like and hate in his immediate future to follow ... men like James and Rezin Bowie, and David Crockett who had once lived here, and men like

Andy Thomas who had passed here in a wagon train back in 1830.

Now, Jefferson in its heyday, was known as "Queen of the West," and existed as the result of three factors . . . the outlaw strip, the New Madrid earthquake which had widened and deepened the basin of Caddo lake, and the great log jam on Red River which, in backing up the waters of the Caddo-Soda basin, created a lake of such immense proportions that steamboat navigation became feasible.

And it was this same craft—the "Alida"—upon which Toye stood talking with Ritt Cameo, which had opened a water trail up the Red River into what was now Jefferson, coming to landings under a blaze of bonfires along the muddy bayou banks, their twin smokestacks belching black smoke as high as the tallest cypress tree.

"Breathtaking and beautiful," Toye remarked, as they made their way down the shallow gangplank and into the milling crowds.

"Yes, I think so too," Ritt said, leading the way. "And I don't mean the town of Jefferson."

Toye knew instantly what he meant, but kept quiet about the matter. It represented an ill-starred drama to him, one in which he had no yearning to play a part. But he did like his elegantly-dressed man beside him, and felt vaguely comforted and protected. Ritt was so huge, so powerful, so dark and sinister, yet, so overly assuring. He wanted to trust this man, even though he was unwary of this trust presently. He decided to play it casually. Better to go in one foot at a time than head first and all at once. He had trusted other men, until he learned their selfish intentions. At least Ritt had the forthrightness and honesty to speak out on what he wanted from the very first.

They had a thick, juicy sirloin at a Drover's cafe on Line street, and a drink after Ritt showed him "Murder Alley," which led south to the river, better known as the dumping ground for the bodies of those who had been unskillful or unlucky in the brawls of the night before. Few mornings passed during these wild times in Jefferson, Ritt informed him, without Murder Alley giving up at least one or two bodies.

The saloon where they had a drink was called "The End of Texas." It was made of clapboard siding, set on stilts, with rod corners. A huge painting of a nude hung behind the grimy bar, her nudity censored by a silken handkerchief because, as Ritt related, so many of the town's female citizens patronized the place. And there were many of them there, Toye observed, many prim females, sedate in flowing silks over enormous hoop-skirts, and many who worked the bar and tables, flashing tinkling trinkets, most of them wearing knee-high dresses of scarlet

Chinese silk shot with metal threads, ruffled at busts and hem with tiers of silk chiffon, shod in satin high-heeled slippers as red as claret and black mesh hose that made their shapely legs look alluring with a smoky mystery of secret allusion.

In one corner sat a man in an old battered up-right piano, the garters on his sleeves the color of emerald, ruffled green halos as he banged away madly on the yellowed keys, while a non-com from the U.S. Cavalry danced doggedly with a prim little girl who was a part of the saloon's trim advertising. Around the dull-colored walls were strung a decorous line of soldiers, clapping drunkenly in mock cadence to the dancers on the creaking floor. The tables were jammed, some customers drinking, others playing poker under clouds of cigar smoke, and women, a little tipsy, their arms entwined in the arms of their escorts, made flowering cascades in the otherwise raw, miserable, smoke-hazed interior of the makeshift saloon.

Behind the bar, stacked on wooden shelves stood rows of colored glass bottles, some shaped like cornucopia, some the shape of a log cabin, many in the shape of an Indian princess, sheaves of grain, eagles, jugs, a lamp post. And embossed in the tinted glass were titles such as: Rough and Ready, Corn of the World, Pike's Peak or Bust, Booz Log Cabin, Jacobs Whiskey, and Just Plain Rotgut.

As Toye leaned on the bar next to Ritt Cameo and surveyed the dark interior with alerted, curiosity he concluded that he had never before in his life witnessed such a motley crew. Outlaws, smugglers, thieves, all the misfits and outcasts flushed into this no-mans land . . . this narrow strip of territory where the law could not touch them ... were represented. Bearded, ragged, dirty, their woolen shirts sweaty with their exertions, their kerchiefs sodden rags. Dusty hats, grimed with the filth of the roads and twisted out of shape, rode low over brooding, sullen eyes.

Tall and thin, or short and robust, they leaned with their elbows on the bar, their tight-levied behinds protruding above leather-worn chaps, their waists weighted with wide belts strung with cartridges, wide holsters strapped to their saddle-hardened thighs with strips of rawhide, boasting shiny Frank North Colts, Colt Peacemakers, or leaning aaginst the bar in front of them like ready sentinenls their short, much-used Winchester carbines.

"They scare hell outa me," Toye remarked to Ritt who turned on him a ready, know-it-all smile.

"Wait till you get to Four-Mile-Branch. There are no women in the encampment, for women are not allowed to accompany their men on wagon trains, and the going gets rough. These outlaws will take anything they can get for a night's pleasure, an Oglala or a Caddoan squaw . . . or anything to whet their sexual appetites." He dragged out this last, giving Toye a quizzical glance.

"Men become animal when there are no laws to curb their instinctive corruption. When they can do as they please, like these exiled degenerates, they usually deviate. I have never seen an outlaw in my life, not a one of these miserable bandits, who wouldn't seek out the strange or bizarre in his carnal lust. It appears to me, Toye, and, believe me, I have made a thorough study of men, particularly this brand of man, the outcast, the reject, society misfits, that lawlessness and degeneracy go hand in hand. There are some real prizes among this group, however they appear on the surface. But you will learn about that in good time."

Toye gave him a narrow glance.

"I don't think so, sir. This is as close as I want to get to any of them. You and I may come to agree on a lot of things, like good horses, good whiskey and craftsmanship in leather tooling, but on men we part company."

"You say that now," Ritt advised, his black eyes sparkling. "But once you're at the Four-Mile-Branch you change your mind. You'll meet ne fine studs there, about your age. They'll w you the ropes . . . teach you a few larks. ce you've learned the stratagem of my thods, how I work, I think you'll come over to side. They were like you once. Now they're a l hitch."

"Now see here, Mr. Cameo," Toye said cut- gly, his sharp eyes raking from his inward eculations down the length of the bar to those Ritt. "I wish you wouldn't assume so much. hat your ranch hands do—er—with you is ur business and theirs but leave me out of it. I ld you once before, I came here to make you a ddle, and let that be the end of it."

"You're a persistent cuss aren't you?" Ritt said, ringing from his flushed face a wry smile; a nile which, to his increasing discomfort, made oye all the more wary of him, mistrustful. "I ave met many boys in my time and not one of hem, mind you, not one of them has failed to be oth fascinated and awed by my offers. But, eeing is believing. Words are but shadows on he wall. So that is all I'll say at present."

The barkeep brought them two drinks, which Ritt had taken the liberty to order and, much to Toye's surprise, they were iced.

"Well I'll never . . ." he cried, speechless.

"See you're becoming fascinated already," Ritt said, handing him the drink. "Jefferson has its own artificial ice plant, as I do at the Four-

Mile-Branch. It is produced in blocks four or five feet long, about three feet wide, and about one inch thick. And it is sold for as little as ten cents a pound."

"You have it all summer, even during August?" Toye questioned, holding the glass up and squinting at its merry sparkle.

"Twelve months a year," Ritt answered, but without braggadocio. "It's one of the few luxuries this mangy town offers and, God knows it needs something, with its ruttish brand of women."

"I think your town is rather nice," Toye praised, with genuine honesty, "I like its hustle and bustle, the rawness of it, the primitive crudeness and newness of it . . . and I might add the women I've seen so far are not the type I'd exactly kick out of bed."

Ritt's face flushed, and his eyes narrowed.

"I'm speaking metaphorically, of course, but I think what you refer to as rawness and newness is in reality the exact opposite of what you mean. You fail to see the dirt, the dissipation, the filth, the disorder, the terrorism, the goatish nature of these hermaphroditic freaks. You are still too young, and I gather from your remark about women, too callow to evaluate what your eyes see. You see only the outer semblances, the excitement of movement, the seemingly idle merrymaking. What you fail to see, Toye, is the real corruption beneath their outer masks. Everyone you see here, including me, is lawless, degenerate, perverted one way or another—and the reason they are this way is because they are running from law and order, from an established society. Actually, they were this way from the very beginning. It has taken a few lawless acts to bring the true ugliness of their natures to the surface, a bank robbery, a minor holdup, prostitution, burglary or horse stealing. Any casual offense can send them on the road to ruin and into this pit of iniquity as a refuge, and once here, safe from any law, they do as they please, as their physical appetites dictate. And there are quite a few unpredictable dictations. It'd make your hair stand on end to hear some of these lecherous inverts brag about their experiences, let alone to be a part of them. They'll stop at nothing short of murder to get what they want . . . no, not even at murder itself with torture as a prelude. Who is there to stop them? Any one of these men in this bar, notorious outlaws all, would slit your throat or knock out your brains with the butt of a Winchester to get to gore you in the behind."

"I don't believe that," Toye said, defiant, giving Ritt a mistrustful eye. "I believe people are basically decent, no matter where they are, or what they're up against."

"Well," Ritt shrugged. "You keep harboring

that attitude and you won't be a virgin for lo
. . . I can tell you that much."

"Aren't you just trying to frighten me?" To
asked, turning from the bar rail and looking hi
squarely in the eyes. "To make all this look
bad that I'll come in with you?"

"How simple everything would be," R
replied, "if only what you say is the truth. Y
frankly, I do want you to come in with me
want that very much, in fact so much it hurts
even think that you shun my offer so complet
But about these miserable reprobates," he poi
ed a finger, "everything I said is the truth. T
have been away from women so long, runn
from the law, sodden, starving, living
animals, that they would just as soon bed do
with a beautiful boy as any woman, and so
would rather. Its a hot hole to put it in, and
in their circumstances can't be choosy. Its jus
way of relieving themselves of sperm, of gett
rid of that ache in the loins, and female or m
what the hell!"

Toye looked at him for a tense, undetermi
moment, then studied the long line of fanta
men leaning on the garish bar; noticing, with
awesome awakening of fear, their terrible,
eyes on him, wanton, beguiling. And at
realization of what their looks conveyed the
filthy core of their intentions, he shrank bac
pure horror. And he considered: if there was

law, then how did the innocent survive these vicious creatures? How did the pure ever remain pure?

And he asked Ritt outright, never venturing the consequences.

"Then how can anyone be safe . . . the young . . . like me? If there is no law here, then every youth, male and female, becomes a victim."

Ritt nodded, and the light glowing in his black eyes was like the light of wisdom in the skulls of the ancients.

"You meant to say . . . young and *beautiful*, did you not, Toye Bell?" He wet his lips, let his tongue slide over his mustache. "That's what I'm trying to tell you. No one is safe here, and most especially the young. Girls lose their virginity at fourteen, and boys know all there is to know about sex by the time they are twelve. The young, mercifully, have learned to profit by their loss of innocence. Both girls and boys become prostitutes."

Toye raised an eyebrow in disdain.

"Prostitutes!"

"Sounds alarming," Ritt said grimly, clicking his teeth.

"It's the most terrible thing I've ever heard of," remarked Toye, wondering what he had let himself in for on coming into this no-mans land. "Don't the citizens ever do anything about their children . . . or don't they care?"

"Do?" Ritt said, as if surprised by the ni
of his remark. "And be murdered in the s
themselves? It is much better to accept fat
is dished out, then to fight the devastating
Besides, it's not too bad on the kids, once t
broken in."

"You make it sound as though ther
more to it then learning to swim, or bein
tized at church," Toye put in, in defense
victims, rather than in defense of h
though he considered himself as well, won
what stand he would take should such
perience impose its revolting hazards on hi

Ritt turned his back to the bar, leane
on his elbows, and studied the swa
smoke-filled saloon.

"The young learn quickly," he answer
low voice. "And their wounds heal wit
scar. They are like squirrel monkeys in a
without visible memories. You can to
squirrel monkey to the point of fainting
an hour afterwards it has forgotten its p
does not remember the face of its tortur
anyone else's face. And that same pers
torture it again and again and it will s
remember. It exists only momentarily,
past nor future, and that is the fate of the
you now observe here in this room. Yeste
them is something that has never ha
Tomorrow is something of which they d

give thought. And today, now, is only a maw from which they hope faintly to survive . . . to at least survive."

"That is cruel . . . or you are cruel," Toye said, eyeing the man beside him, in his look the revulsion from the depths of his soul.

"You are wrong about both," was Ritt's cool reply. "Life itself is cruel. This is but the survival of the fittest. The Gotterdammerung . . . the twilight of the gods . . . the last day for gods and men. This is always our last day, Toye Bell, unless we are permitted to see another sunrise. The strong over the weak. The weak over the innocent. And the innocent, really, over them all . . . that terrible, terrible strength of the innocent . . . like yourself."

Toye gave him a disgusted look, his fine, keen lips going down mockingly at one corner.

"I've heard enough. Why don't you show me the Four-Mile-Branch and get it over with?"

Once outside the saloon, having to worm their way through the advancing, seemingly unending mob, Toye marveled at the streeet lamps which were already lit, bright yellow blobs in the foggy, dusty darkness.

"Another of our cosmopolitan novelties," Ritt said, noticing his interest. "We have our own artificial gas plant. Pine knots are heated in huge retort and the gas expanding from the heated pine is conveyed through cast-iron pipes to lamp

"Do?" Ritt said, as if surprised by the niavete of his remark. "And be murdered in the streets themselves? It is much better to accept fate as it is dished out, then to fight the devastating odds. Besides, it's not too bad on the kids, once they're broken in."

"You make it sound as though there's no more to it then learning to swim, or being baptized at church," Toye put in, in defense of the victims, rather than in defense of himself; though he considered himself as well, wondering what stand he would take should such an experience impose its revolting hazards on him.

Ritt turned his back to the bar, leaned back on his elbows, and studied the swarming, smoke-filled saloon.

"The young learn quickly," he answered in a low voice. "And their wounds heal without a scar. They are like squirrel monkeys in a way… without visible memories. You can torture a squirrel monkey to the point of fainting and in an hour afterwards it has forgotten its pain and does not remember the face of its torturer from anyone else's face. And that same person can torture it again and again and it will still not remember. It exists only momentarily, without past nor future, and that is the fate of the young you now observe here in this room. Yesterday to them is something that has never happened. Tomorrow is something of which they dare not give thought. And today, now, is only a maw from which they hope faintly to survive . . . to at least survive."

"That is cruel . . . or you are cruel," Toye said, eyeing the man beside him, in his look the revulsion from the depths of his soul.

"You are wrong about both," was Ritt's cool reply. "Life itself is cruel. This is but the survival of the fittest. The Gotterdammerung . . . the twilight of the gods . . . the last day for gods and men. This is always our last day, Toye Bell, unless we are permitted to see another sunrise. The strong over the weak. The weak over the innocent. And the innocent, really, over them all . . . that terrible, terrible strength of the innocent . . . like yourself."

Toye gave him a disgusted look, his fine, keen lips going down mockingly at one corner.

"I've heard enough. Why don't you show me the Four-Mile-Branch and get it over with?"

Once outside the saloon, having to worm their way through the advancing, seemingly unending mob, Toye marveled at the streeet lamps which were already lit, bright yellow blobs in the foggy, dusty darkness.

"Another of our cosmopolitan novelties," Ritt said, noticing his interest. "We have our own artificial gas plant. Pine knots are heated in huge retort and the gas expanding from the heated pine is conveyed through cast-iron pipes to lamp posts along the streets and along the wharfs at Swanson's Landing."

"Unique," Toye replied. "But it causes me to wonder why a town would go to the trouble of having iced drinks and artificially lighted streets if its occupants are no more appreciative than the filthy outlaws that infest this place?"

"Money," Ritt answered, leading the way through the crowded boardwalk to the livery stable where the two horses were waiting. "Most of these outlaws are loaded down with it and ... constantly on the run, never knowing if they will live out the day ... spend it like it was burning their levis. This is a boom town, Toye, though it is lawless, and in a buffer zone, neither in Texas nor Louisiana, actually. Here, too, all the meat is furnished for the army, from the slaughterhouses and meat packing plants. Herds coming in from all over Texas are processed and shipped to New Orleans. Plenty of money flowing, plenty of whiskey, plenty of loose women, cocottes, filles de joie, and carnal deviations ... what more could a good-looking boy like you ask? You're going to love it here, Toye. And I'm going to see to it that you do. You just stick by me and you'll be wearing diamonds in your asshole."

"That's a hell of a place to wear them," Toye said with a snort. And he concluded, but to himself, that this Ritt Cameo was a sex maniac or, as they would have referred to him in New

Orleans, where he had but recently completed the trappings for the horses in an equestrian circus act, a flesh worshipper.

Not that he was an authority on the subject of bodily pleasures. Despite Toye's twenty-four years, he was as callow and sexless as a leaf, with only mild curiosity concerning women, and still less about men. The passions, as yet, had lain dormant in his veins, silent, sleeping rhythms, waiting to be stirred, aroused, to go roaring like a runaway through his lithe, sinuous body. As yet, he had met no one who possessed the unbridled hunger to awake these burning emotions within him, and until he was awakened, and the burden of his sexual desire flooded him with living, fantastic flames, he lived—or thought he lived—content, never having experienced the rapture of erotic awakening. It was there in him, alive and vital and super-human, a beautiful fiery bud, ready to blossom into full flower at a touch . . . but the touch had not yet come . . .

When the horses were saddled, and bridled they took a trail bordering Caddo Lake, rode silently through fields of broomweed, through plains of vetch and lespedeza, as the light of Jefferson dimmed to the southward, then through pastures of Dallas Grass and bahia and tall, waving islands of fescue, passing a ranch house only now and then, their lighted windows shining like welcoming hearthfires of home, jeweled oases in a desert of starlit darkness, over dunes of alluvial flood-soil, white sand plains, and up a rise which ascended gradually to an enormous hill. There Ritt drew rein and pointed to a black shape on the horizon.

"My ranch," he whispered, almost in reverence. "I call it 'High Afton'." He clucked to his roan. "Come, Toye Bell, follow me. With pride and with daring in my heart I want to show you what could be yours, if you had the will and cunning to see it."

Toye could not attempt an answer, and they rode the rest of the way in perplexed and anxious silence, going under an arch where the name HIGH AFTON was spelled out in beaten iron; through a series of rail fences and onto a vast, velvet-carpeted lawn where the ranch-house itself rose in palatial splendor.

"It's breathtaking," Toye remarked, as he gazed up its lofty height, to its enormous square brick pillars which soared to an upper gallery and slanting shingled roof, its tall, tinted-glass windows ablaze with multi-colored lights.

Several ranch hands loitered on the ground-level porch steps, sitting idly on the thick banister-poles, but were instantly afoot and gathering around them as they approached. Ritt tossed them the reins and with his wide-brimmed Stetson instantly in his hand, as if Toye was woman, escorted him across the porch and into a vast, well-lighted hall.

The place was richly adorned, as Toye's rapt gaze swiftly showed him. And he studied it with a deeper fascination than he had previously counted on. In fact, he had been wary of approaching it at all, of being under the same roof with this man whom he both admired and feared.

The long, deep hall, with its black-beamed ceiling, the wide doors on either side leading into living room and library, the grey ash floors, the claret-colored Spanish furnishings, the cowhide sofas, the ox-blood colored divans and chairs, the hunting trophies on the plaster walls, the tiers and tiers of guns and dueling pistols in their glass coffins, the stuffed deer and buffalo heads, the Indian buffalo robes draped gaudily over couch and table, the quill-decorated blankets, the Tularosa pottery, the Adena figurines, the mounted longhorns, the pipes, the golden gleam of fine polished leather and wood and sandstone were all of Texas influence, and deeply personal and predominately masculine.

It was a mansion for a male, Toye concluded, as his gaze slid full circle. The house was without the frill and lace and blossom so overwhelmingly evident in homes presided over by women.

This was the home of Ritt Cameo. It was Ritt Cameo, and Toye would have guessed it even had he not known that it was the sole property of the man who stood beside him with bright, animal eyes.

"Well, what do you think of it?" Ritt asked, his own pride in the place written plainly in the golden lights of his agate gaze.

"It is one of the most beautiful homes I was ever in," Toye replied, picking out minute things he had by-passed on his first look around. "You are certainly a man of property. Well-established. Secure. Man needs these things . . . as a bulwark against the crudities and discomforts of life."

"Are you secure?" Ritt asked, coming to Toye's side where he fingered an alabaster statue of a drover herding longhorns. "I mean, if I may ask, are you so well established that you can turn up your nose to such grandeur and say 'no' so pertly to my overwhelming offers?"

Toye looked at him quickly to see if there was a sneer behind his words, but there was none. His dark, handsome face was as bland as a babe's like that of a pagan prince under the luminou aura of lamplight.

"I have done well at saddle-making," h explained, running his finger down the shar spine of one of the miniature longhorns. "I suppose you might say I have the things I need. An I grew up never wanting much. Papa always gav me what he thought I needed and I nev complained. When he and Mama went, I was le with what they had; and I also have my ability in leather tooling, which thankfully, Papa handed on to me, and which is more important."

"Yes . . . I suppose it is," Ritt said, a little crestfallen. "Its good to have a trade, especially if that trade is a rarity, like your art in leather tooling. Makes you unique. And in a country as raw, as ferocious as this, here in this corner of Texas, you need something you can count on, something that puts you in demand."

"I love my work," Toye said, trying to smile. But it was a nervous, unsure smile. "I am happiest when I am turning out works of art in leather, for I am creating then, building something worthwhile, something that will last."

"I know what you mean," Ritt agreed. He pulled a tasseled cord near the enormous hearth and a moment later a Chinese servant entered the library. Ritt ordered drinks in a polite tone, then resumed his conversation with Toye. "High Afton to me is a work of art, something I have built myself, from nothing. I came here from Richmond. Got into a little trouble with a girl in a buggy one night, was expelled from West Point. I refused to marry the girl, and had to shoot it out in a duel with her brother, also from West Point. So Father carted me off west, for she had three other brothers who were as trigger-happy as drunken Indians, and Father figured I wouldn't be so lucky if all three challenged me to duels. I bought a few head of longhorns, had them butchered and sold the meat to the army, which brought me a neat profit, so I multiplied my herd, cutting out the best ones for beef and keeping the lean ones to reproduce. Then, I accidently stumbled onto a miracle. Bois d'Arc . . . a seed, mind you, seed planted and used for growing fences. It grows horse-high, bull-strong, and pig-tight, and sells for eighty dollars a bushel. I bought buffalo hides from the Indians, and I started a campground for wagon trains heading west, toward El Paso. Now, I own this ranch, hundreds of acres of land, all the bunk barracks, the stores and saloons and hotel here in Four-Mile-Branch. A kingdom, Toye Bell, with a house of such lavish appointments and beauty as to be practically a palace in its time and place. There is no other spread like it east of Dallas, and someday this very spot will be a prominent landmark on the maps of the nation."

"You've done well," Toye complimented, cutting his curious eyes here and there. "And I suppose you are envied, and greatly admired."

Ritt smiled, and his bright, animal eyes fairly twinkled.

"Envied, yes, but admired—no. Hate is a better word, Toye Bell, rebellious hate. High Afton is the one place the outlaws do not and cannot touch and destroy, for I am too powerful a personage in these parts. I make my own laws at High Afton. In fact . . . I am the law."

"A god," Toye lamented, inwardly shrinking under this lofty grandeur.

"I wish you meant that," Ritt said with passion in his voice. The Chinese servant returned, bearing an enormous ebony tray on which rested two smoked-glassed whiskies. Ritt took them both, dismissed the sallow faced servant, and handed one to Toye. "Yes," he went on, in a more solemn tone. "I wish someone held me in much esteem, loved me for what I represent, rather than what I can give them in exchange for affection, physical pleasures. Actually, I am a man with personality. I am not ugly nor deformed. I dress well, am versed on gourmet food, travel and fashions, I can carry on a decent conversation, if my paramours allow it and I pride myself on my potential in bed. But," and he shrugged bitterly, his eyes growing dark, lusterless, "my so-called victims overlook all these qualities. Or shall I say they are too hurried to see them in their pursuit of my money, and gifts, the fat positions I can put into their greedy hands. I am a lonely man, Toye Bell, and that loneliness has cost me a fortune."

"You're not married? No children?" Toye asked, feeling a little sorry for this handsome man pouring out his inner emotions, when Toye did not want to feel any emotion for him at all.

"Good grief . . . no!" Ritt replied, his eyebrows twisting down in a disdainful frown. "I hate women! Give my mother credit for that. Like all vain women, she thought she could own me body and soul and, like a witch who puts you under a spell, lays a curse on you, Mother managed to lay her weakness on me. I am an ordinary man until I find someone I really want then I become a possessive monster. I want to devour that person, as she did me, want to own them, cherish them, pet and spoil them, keep them forever safe with me. I want to protect them for myself, I recognize this shamefully, but also from the brutalities of the world; to wrap them in eider-down, safe, secure, beautiful, innocent and unafraid for my own joy, my own happiness." He stopped talking for a moment, and gave Toye one long, deliberate look, a look that went to the back of his mind. "Do you think I am so awful . . . a kind of monster? I must know, Toye Bell, now. It's very important to me."

"I don't think you're a monster at all, Mr. Cameo," Toye replied, his expression deeply earnest, "a person should be proud to be wanted by you, to receive your love."

Ritt moved closer to him at that, his black eyes blazing.

"Could you ever care for me, Toye Bell? Really care, I mean?"

"In what way?" Toye came back without delay.

"In every way," Ritt explained, his voice so low, so primed with passion it was but a whisper in this still room, with the only sound that of the crackling fire in the huge hearth.

"You mean . . ."

Ritt did not give him time to finish.

"I mean live here at High Afton with me. Let me love you. Let me be good to you."

Toye lifted an eyebrow. Confusion and fear surged nervously through his every vein and sinew.

"What kind of love would that be, Mr. Cameo?"

"A kind of love you have never known," Ritt said with genuine emotion, leaning so close that Toye could feel the animal warmth of his huge body, smell his whisky breath. "For the deep love of a man for a man is deeper than any love of man for woman. The power of that kind of strength. The magnetism of that kind of hold. The beauty of that ferocity. The calm, sublime limbo which follows that kind of violence. If a man and woman can love to distration, think what love can be like between two men. Think what they could share together, a binding physical and mental love without the obligation of marriage, without the inconvenience of children. They would both be free, yet bound by a mutual fondness that no one, not even God, could rend asunder."

"You talk crazy," Toye cried, backing away, feeling profoundly this man's warped nature and fearful of his immediate intentions. "Men are not supposed to . . . LOVE . . . men! Why don't you get you a woman if you're that lonely? It appears to me that they can fill a lot of gaps in a man's life."

"God damn women!" Ritt shouted, his eyes flashing fire, his fist crashing against a polished mahogany table. "What I am speaking about has nothing at all to do with women. Hell . . . I'm talking about you and me!

"What about us?" Toye shouted back, truly uneasy now.

"I want you," Ritt answered or rather implored, his pleading voice dragging on Toye's every nerve, his hand reaching out, his long, heavily-ringed fingers groping, desperately. "Toye . . . Toye . . . from the very first moment I saw you this afternoon aboard the Alida . . . naked . . . your beautiful body drenched in the light, I knew I wanted you, and would want you for the balance of my life. Why . . . I do not know. Do not be angry. Do not think me some kind of despicable heathen, a deformed odalisque in mind and body. If only you knew how I feel! If only our minds could change places for a little while, and you could see yourself as I see you, then you would understand—then you would come to me willingly and enjoy me, my world, and the pleasures I would give you. If only you would let me touch you, prove to you what I mean, what I feel for you."

Reaching out, he caught hold of Toye's naked arm warmly, affectionately, but Toye jerked away, annoyed, afraid, uncertain.

"If ... if only I knew what you ... er ... wanted to do," he stammered, trying to find words. "Then ... then maybe I could help ... could better understand you."

"Toye!" he cried desperately, almost frantically. He set his drink on the table, came so close to him Toye could feel his radiance, the powerful magnetism of his person pulling him into its grasp. "I want you ... as I would want a woman."

"What?"

"Oh, God! Don't make me put it into words ... please!"

"You mean ..."

"To copulate with you." Ritt hung his head, as his voice trailed off, died in the still room. "An orgasm with your fine body."

Toye withdrew, as if he had been struck. He eyed Ritt there for a vibrating moment, still in the state of shock from his unexpected words, his quivering voice, not knowing whether to believe such a preposterous thing.

crawling back to me and this fortress of security and safety. You'll wish to God you had never gone."

"I'll take my chances," Toye told him, defiantly, looking into Ritt's eyes with level gaze . . .

"Yes . . . you'll take your chances," said Ritt bitterly, giving Toye a stern look. "Then it will be too late. They'll have ruined you by then, spoiled you in the taking, and spoiled you for me. I like best them that have never been touched."

"I've always manged to keep myself untouched," Toye told him, his mind at the same time conjuring up numerous occasions when he had come near to being taken. "I do not indulge in what does not interest me. I'm not just cut out to be a bed-fellow to a man."

"I think different," Ritt said, fighting still for his interests. "There is something about you . . . that fatal sign . . . that is a dead give-away. But," he said, slowly, making his way into the hall and motioning for Toye to follow him. "I guess you've got to do it the hard way."

They made their way silently down the wide hall to the front gallery where several of the ranch hands sat waiting, vigilant to Ritt's every beck and call.

"Take this boy to bunkhouse number ten," he demanded of the one nearest them. "Show him an empty bunk. See that he eats."

"You mean that bunkhouse near the saloon?" the ranch hand asked, sleepy-eyed, his battered felt hat instantly in his hands.

"Yes, you fool galoot!" Ritt shouted rudely, pointing. "Where the boys bunk. I don't want him in with the older men."

"Yessah," the ranch hand muttered, and motioned for Toye to follow.

"Keep your pants on," Ritt advised, gripping Toye's arm for an affectionate moment. "You still have time to change your mind."

"Thanks, but no," Toye said thoughtfully, and directly. "But," he added, as if he heeded Ritt's precautions about the scummy hired hands. "I'll keep a sharp eye out."

Chapter Three

Toye did keep a sharp eye out. Ritt's advice had been timely and very wise. The four boys in the bunk house where he was assigned resented him like the plague.

They were all about his age, nicely built, small of stature, flashy, a little too vain about their looks, and seemed to thrive on being each others rivals . . . for what reason he was soon to learn.

"So Cameo has found him another one!" said one of the boys when Toye had selected an empty bunk and had piled his belongings on top. The boy, who, as Toye was later to learn was named Dink Scallan, was the most rugged of the lot. Robust, rippling with hard muscle, shiny green eyes filled with daring and curiosity, with black curly hair tumbling constantly over his brow, he looked and was dangerous. His voice rang with jealousy and envy, and he went about with a chip on his shoulder, daring anyone to knock it off. And the neat little scars which criss-crossed around his cheekbones and down one side of his lower lip announced that many had dared.

They had all gathered around Toye's bunk when the boy named Dink had spoken as he had, each in turn giving the newcomer careful scrutiny. All of them, to Toye's silent speculation, sized him up in relation to themselves, each separately, as if by his arrival they might lose. As if he were a prize bull locked in the pen with numerous other bulls, they gauged his potential, tested him, taxed his endurance, bluffed, strutted, bragged, ridiculed, all the while, compared his capabilities with theirs, as if they considered him an opponent in some kind of crazy game, in which they themselves might be put at a disadvantage because of his envied qualifications.

Obviously embittered by his unexpected presence in their neat little set-up, hating him instantly because he represented a danger to something very dear to them and very essential to their livelihood, they proceeded to condemn him because of some inner, mutual guilt of their own.

"Where did Ritt pick *you* up?" one of them asked, rakishly, "Must be losing his touch, scraping the bottom of the barrel."

"Nobody picked me up," Toye answered, fuming, but with all the politeness he could summon.

"He picks them *all* up," came another voice, the one everyone called Cincy Lee, who was girlishly small, silver-eyed, with long, thick hair the exact color of sand.

Toye gave him a sharp look.

"I came here to make a saddle for an Arabian horse of his," he said, then tried to busy himself setting up his gear.

They all laughed at that, uproariously.

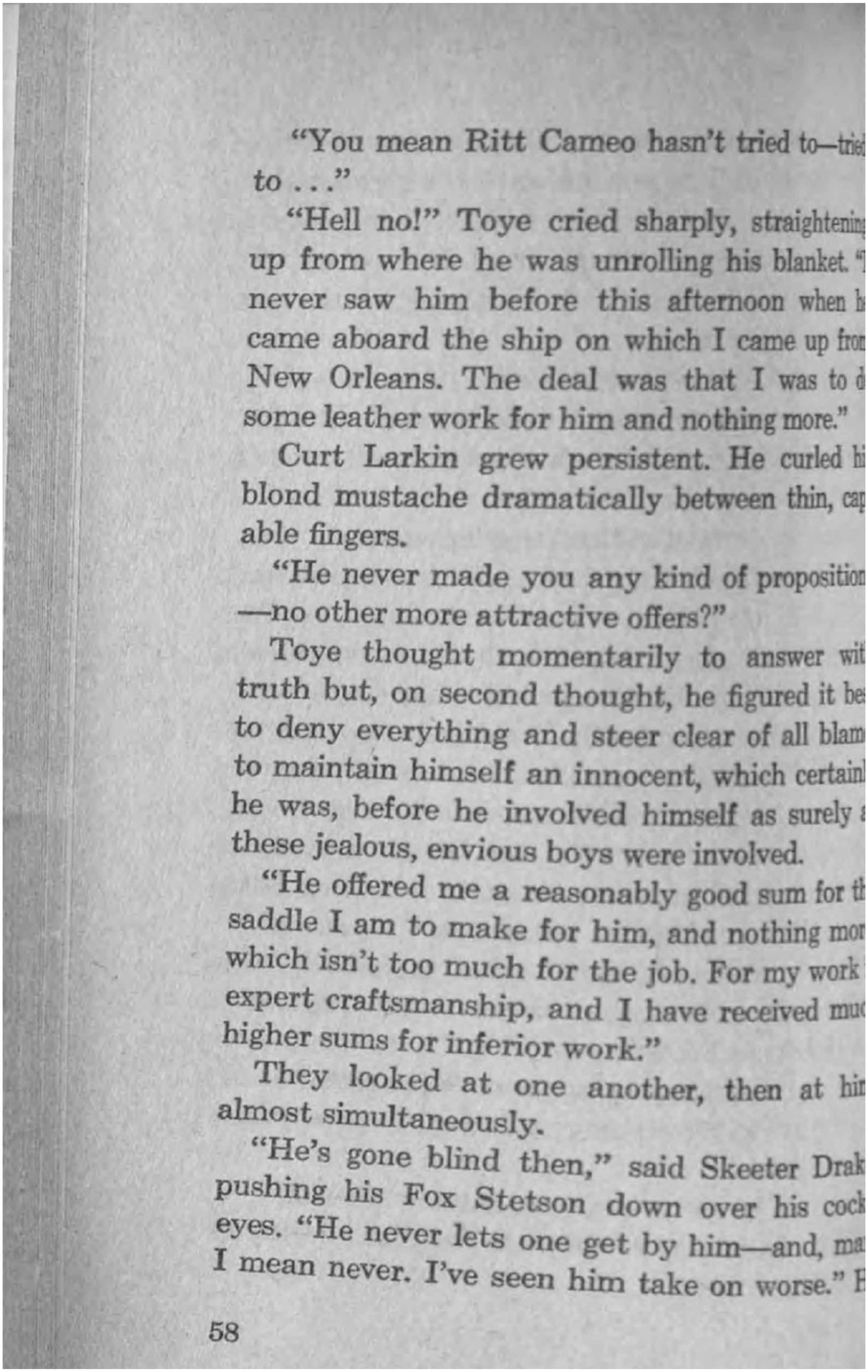
"Oh, that's what they all say," jeered the one named Curt Larkin, the best-looking of the group, who wore his blond hair to his shoulders, had a curled mustache, sparkling hazel eyes, and the smoothest complexion Toye had ever seen on a man. "They all come here to do one thing or another. Dink Scallan as a bronc buster, Cincy Lee as a cattle doctor, Skeeter Drake as a lariat instructor, and me a territorial guide. But Ritt Cameo has found better uses for us."

"You mean . . ." Toye cried, skeptical, not wanting to believe that these rough-and-ready boys were but bed fellows to Ritt.

"No, don't go playing innocent on us," said Dink cuttingly, his sharp, piercing eyes invading Toye's calm.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

Curt Larkin gave him a peculiar, accusing stare.



"You mean Ritt Cameo hasn't tried to—tried to . . ."

"Hell no!" Toye cried sharply, straightening up from where he was unrolling his blanket. "I never saw him before this afternoon when h came aboard the ship on which I came up fro New Orleans. The deal was that I was to d some leather work for him and nothing more."

Curt Larkin grew persistent. He curled hi blond mustache dramatically between thin, capable fingers.

"He never made you any kind of proposition —no other more attractive offers?"

Toye thought momentarily to answer wit truth but, on second thought, he figured it be to deny everything and steer clear of all blam to maintain himself an innocent, which certainl he was, before he involved himself as surely a these jealous, envious boys were involved.

"He offered me a reasonably good sum for th saddle I am to make for him, and nothing mor which isn't too much for the job. For my work expert craftsmanship, and I have received muc higher sums for inferior work."

They looked at one another, then at hin almost simultaneously.

"He's gone blind then," said Skeeter Drak pushing his Fox Stetson down over his cock eyes. "He never lets one get by him—and, ma I mean never. I've seen him take on worse." H eyed Toye from head to foot, deliberately, mockingly. "But damn-slam, he's used to better ... er, men." He punched Curt who stood next to him.

"You're his special brand," said Curt, giving Toye equal scrutiny. "That smooth hide, that thick yellow hair, them bone hard muscles. You're a heifer in his eyes, Toye Bell. A clean little heifer, ripe for tapping."

Though Toye now realized how the game was being played, he eyed them each in turn, coldly, accusingly, and played his innocence to the hilt.

"You fellows sure talk in riddles. I can't tell head nor tails of what you mean. Score me in. What's all the mystery about Mr. Ritt Cameo?"

Curt Larkin, who to Toye appeared a little older than the others, gazed silently around the circle of startled men, as if he read their thoughts and in turn conveyed some secretive message to them with his burning eyes. Then taking Toye by the forearm, led him down the long row of bunks and out onto the shallow apron just outside the door.

"Let us walk a spell," he suggested. "Too much bickering inside . . . crazy, confused, outlaw kids. They think you're horning in on their precious territory, which isn't precious to them at all. They hate this sordid life but find it perferable to the outside, and the law that is waiting for them."

He led the way, with Toye obediently following, and they came to a little dark, beaten path which skirted a hill, as if they were going directly into a midst of twinkling stars.

"They think I'm lying about Ritt Cameo," Toye said with calm.

"I know that," Curt whispered, falling back so that they could both take the trail side by side. "At first I thought you were lying too, but yo are quick on the fact. That is why I brought you out here, to be with you alone, so that I could key you in on all the unvarnished details."

"I think I already know . . . in part," Toye said, but without any attempt at acting the smart-aleck.

"Only an idiot wouldn't suspect something," Curt said softly lowly, preening his long hair about his ears. "I do not know how to begin, now that I have decided on telling you the tale. There is so much to say, so much that has happened here, that is still happening, that I do not now know which to tell and which to leave out."

Toye suggested: "Why don't you begin from the beginning."

"There never seemed a beginning," Curt said shyly, or regretfully, and he hung his head sadly, his profile hidden in his mass of long curling hair. "It seems now that I've always been here, Toye Bell, a prisoner in my own prison, and eve though there are no walls, no bars, no moats, I cannot find the courage to escape, to just walk away and out of this peccable life forever."

Toye looked at him, deep in thought.

"Is it all that bad?"

"From what I've seen of you and know of you, your manner, your obvious clean breeding, I must say that you have never known the kind of people who live inside these shoddy walls, sleep in these flea-bitten bunks. They—we are like animals. When the days are lean we fast and pray for better, and when there is a kill we slash and claw and sink our fangs into the other, tearing at our feast, greedy, gutty, devouring desperately in fear of future gnawing stomachs—emptiness and loneliness. By all this I mean we are the beasts and Ritt Cameo the monarch who tossess a few crumbs now and then. At first, we clung to the little dabs of cash, pieces of gold, he cast among us, but then, later, when we discovered finally that we were all in this together, that he cared no more for one of us than the other, we banded together. And when he chose one of us to spend a night with him we would later divide the pay-off money among all four. Oh, there have been others, many others in fact. Some of them have lasted. Some of them have not. And some of them have gone on to the other bunk houses and are living with older, less fortunate men. But we have stuck somehow, Dink and Cincy and Skeeter and me, stuck because at one time each one of us were in love with Ritt Cameo, and we somehow cannot ever forget him."

"Do all of you still—er—love him?" Toye asked, mildly curious. It was such a strange, outlandish world he had stumbled into, and he wanted to explore its every facet.

"Maybe not *love*," Curt answered sadly, hanging his head. "But something vaguely akin to it. Memory I guess. Memory is the thing that keeps us going to him . . . whenever he calls one of us. The memory of High Afton, Ritt's wonderful world, the luxury, the fine clothes, the food, the adoration he lavished on us . . . for a while . . . for so brief a while. He tired of us, naturally, as he tires so easily of everything else, and we were carted off to the bunk house to sit and grieve while another one took our place. Its a way of life, Toye Bell, that once you sink yourself, your thoughts, your mind and heart and body into, you lose your way out. You lose your way back into that other kind of world, a world which never seemed to exist really, and you hang on and on . . . just deep hanging on for reasons you are never quite certain of, reasons are not clear to you, or even of interest. Yet, bogged down in its filthy mire, you fear that if you try to move, try to set yourself free, you will only sink deeper and deeper."

“Can’t you get away? Just walk out, catch a
rain, a boat, a wagon train?”

“It’s not that easy,” Curt replied, as they
alted at the top of a hill and, turning, gazed
ack over the Four-Mile-Branch, the tiny pin-
oints of light from the oil lamps in the bunk
ouse windows, listened to the neighing of the
orraled horses, the bellowing of longhorns on
he night-covered slopes. “We are all criminals
f a sort,” he went on sadly. “Not vicious
rimes, not like the lifers, but minor offenses,
hings boys will do who are homeless wanderers.
here’s no place we can go but here, the only
lace safe from the law, so we stick it out. Even
we tried to get away, Ritt would find us and
ring us back, have us beaten, shackled for days
vithout food and water. Skeeter tried it once. It
ook Ritt over a month to locate him, and when
e did he had him almost beaten to death, kept
im locked in a dark cistern for days, and when
e finally brought him into the light chained him
n his bedroom until his appetite was fulfilled.
Vhen Skeeter was brought back to the bunk-
ouse he couldn’t even walk, his rectum—was so
nutilated.”

“Good God!” Toye stormed, humiliated, even
n the darkness, over hearing something so ut-
erly vile and profane.

“I know all this sounds terrible to you,” Curt
ontinued. He reached down, broke off a broom

weed, thrust it into his mouth and began to chew on it. "There's so much more he's done, so much I can't put it into words. And I suppose you think we're as rotten as he is."

Toye shook his head, leaned up against the dead stump of a cottonwood.

"The way you all went at me at first made me think I was horning in where I didn't belong, that I was trying to take something away from you, depriving you of something you wanted ... badly."

"Well, I suppose anyone would get that impression at first sight of us," he said. He looked away across the land, at the cold, sparkling stars, as if he devoured High Afton with his eyes, his heart, his soul. "We all hate Ritt, but we realize that if he loses interest in us, we will be put to work, herding the longhorns, rustling, cutting wood, working the fields, in the galley, or the hundred and one other manual tasks which some of the men here do day and night. Hard labor from sunup till sundown, and with no pay, only their keep. For everyone here is a criminal, many of them murderers with two or three killings to their credit, and they can't kick. Here they can keep their lives and their safety from punishment by the law, but little else."

"In other words Ritt Cameo is getting rich off criminal labor."

"More than just rich. A multi-millionare is more like it. And he owns us. He does with us what he pleases, even uses our bodies the way he desires, without one protest from us. We have learned, Toye, not to squeal. He maintains a crew of men, all hardened, bitter criminals, many of them escapees from northern prisons, who do his bloody work for him. And they are ever too glad to jerk up someone, give him a beating, for it lets off steam, arouses their sadistic natures. Men and even young boys, boys who will not go along with Ritt's sexual hungers, are killed here and the world never knows nor misses them I reckon. You see them admidst the others, working, riding, at the corrals, at night in their bunk house, then one day you don't see them anymore and you know Ritt has done away with them. Its a hard, bitter life, but . . . it is a life."

He stopped talking then and together they studied the lamplit horizon in silence. Hundreds of tiny lights lit up in the dark vastness of the plains, in long even rows where the bunkhouses were located, in groups and blazing faintly where campfires of the drovers winked from the spreading grazing lands.

"Looks like something could be done," Toye said at last, breaking their mood. "It all sounds too much like Sodom, and Ritt a David or a Saul or a Solomon. I never knew men committed such acts until today. Oh," he shrugged, "I heard whisper of them while in New Orleans in the French Quarter, things that even decent men only discussed in undertones, and certain men on the streets were pointed out to me as being fops, but it all meant nothing to me, and I figured it was more gossip than actuality."

"That's all I know here," Curt said gravely, and his voice sounded frightened, hollow in the bowl of the open sky. "Men with other men, men loving men. Men fighting over other men of their choice, even killing sometimes during jealous rages over a lover. I've seen men pay court to young boys with more determination and desperation than they would to court any woman, and I have seen them more jealous than they could ever be over a woman."

"Aren't there any women here at all?" Toye asked, more out of curiosity in their interests, their pleasures, than in his.

"Ritt don't allow them," Curt replied. He rolled a cigarette from a sack of brown mule in his shirt pocket, struck a kitchen match on the skin-tight levis, lit it as Toye watched his features spring up into the yellow glow. Curt was a handsome boy, he thought, and his long hair and curling mustache lent him a dashing air, like a pirate or a gypsy or one of the knights of old. "He says women are an obstacle in the way of progress, that one lousy female can keep fifty men from doing their jobs. In a way he is right. I don't like pawing women around men trying to do their work. But that is not the main reason he don't allow women at High Afton. They are rivals, and may take some of his studs away from him." He paused, puffed on his cigarette, watched intently as the white smoke circled his head. "But, in a way this is too rough a place for any woman. Criminals, murderers, outlaws are hard on women. There used to be women here, and more of them in Jefferson but they've been thinned out, especially the whores. Men are so cruel to them, beatings, getting them pregnant, raping them, forcing them to turn to drink, that so many commit suicide every year that the Jefferson Bulletin don't even bother to write them up in the obituary columns. Men, young boys, like Skeeter and Cincy and especially Dink —for he is so rough himself, can endure so much, can take the crudeness of these criminals—but women are too frail, too delicate, even though they have a womb which, as the saying goes, can be stretched a mile without tearing an inch."

Toye laughed softly at that, but then his expression returned to one of sober concern.

"I never thought it possible for one man to actually fuck another man. The anatomy of the male just doesn't seem to suitably lend itself to such an act."

"You *are* the callow one," Curt said pertly, clicking his teeth. "It can be done and is done here regularly. Some boys can be fucked as easily as women. Though to some it is extremely painful, and I feel sorry for that kind. I know what they must be going through, especially if they're being forced, as many of them are here. They all buck and scream and wiggle at first, but once they're broken in, some of them really take to it and enjoy it. Take Cincy Lee for instance. He's one of the finest fucks I've ever had ... real jam."

Toye gave him a startled look, studied his expression when he inhaled on his cigarette, lighting up his handsome face.

"You boys in the bunkhouse ... er ... put it to each other?"

"Oh, sometimes, for pleasure though, and not for loot, like we do with the other ranch hands."

"You sell yourselves to other men besides Ritt Cameo?"

"We might as well, Toy Bell," he said with a casual air, as if he was talking about selling bread. "We can't go anywhere. Ritt has broken us in anyway, and God knows, many of the men are better to us than he is. When the wagon trains come in or young drovers bring in a herd of longhorns they are eager for sex pleasures, want to spend their hard earned money drinking and lying in bed, so," he shrugged his broad shoulders. "we sell ourselves, and stash away our ass-money for the time we can hope to leave here for good."

Toye whispered sadly, trying to picture it in his young mind: "It all sounds so . . . awful. Kinda makes you sick."

"Its not so bad, not like you might think. As I said, many of the men are kind to us. They bring us gifts. Some of them even fall in love with us. Sometimes though, when they are drunk, we get beat up, or they get too rough on our ass, but none of them are like Ritt . . . his cruelty, his desperation. The things he has done to us."

"It makes me hate him," Toye said, and he suddenly felt sorry for the likable boy beside him. "I have a different picture now of you and the other boys in the bunkhouse."

"They're all good boys, Toye Bell. Mixed up, naturally but decent and honest, despite the fact they are homeless, uneducated runaways. And you'll get to meet a lot of other nice men here if you stay long enough, especially those who drive the wagon trains and the young drovers. But the boys in the bunkhouse, Skeeter and Cincy and Dink, they have had a hell of a time of it. Skeeter is Ritt's favorite, mainly because he is equipped with a rod as big as a breeding stallion. Skeeter says Ritt will stay between his legs all night when he is called up to the big house, sucking on his rod and his seeds, drawing—pulling at them like a calf at an udder. I have seen Skeeter's rod swelled to twice its normal size from Ritt mouthing it all night. He has even sucked blood from him when Rick could no longer shoot his wad of sperm. And you should see Cincy's nipples where he has bitten them; he even chewed one off. He has bruises and teeth marks all over the front of his chest, and Ritt goes wild over Dink's ass, which also is bruised and scarred from his teeth and fist marks."

"And you?" Toye asked, with tongue in cheek.

"My job is sucking his rod. That's all he wants of me. I don't mind too much, except I hate to swallow the sperm, which he makes me do. I feel rotten afterwards, like a part of his rotten ways are inside me."

He spit, his profile a dark silhouette against the star sprinkled sky. And he looked then to Toye so docile, so cowed beneath the tryanny of Ritt Cameo and his kind; he seemed a defenseless animal trapped by the base cruelities of man.

"Thank God he will never make his demands on me," Toye said, with determination, gritting his teeth, the doleful sight of Curt Larkin, his pride gone, his youth ravished, lending him a bulwark of raw courage.

Curt turned and looked at him, his eyes faintly aglow by the shroud of moonlight.

"Has he tired . . . truly? I won't tell the others."

"He tried . . . he does want me," Toye answered quietly "Says he wants me more than anyone he has ever known."

"He may mean that," Curt said in a serious tone. "Damn, I wish he did mean that, and that you had the guts to keep telling him 'no.' "

"He won't ever touch me. My death will be the only way he'll ever do that."

"He will though," Curt said gravely, fearfully. "Oh, he may be patient with you for awhile if you string him along, promise."

"That's what I intend to do," Toye said. "Make him court me, but never give in. And I'm going to make him do something else."

"What?" Curt cried, up in arms in Toye's support.

"I have an idea," Toye answered, as he thought things out very slowly, thoroughly. "Do you and the others mind so much selling yourselves to the other men?"

"Not as long as they pay," Curt answered, shaking his head. "White or black or even Indian, clean or dirty, old or young, fat or lean, so long as they have the ready loot."

"I'm going to make Ritt build me a saloon instead of paying me in cash for the saddle I came here to make. A Saloon with rooms on the second floor. And I'll run it and you boys can work the tables and the customers."

Curt thought for a moment.

"Sounds good, but do you think Big Daddy Ritt wants your tail that much? That's a heap of loot for one saddle."

"He wants me," Toye replied, confident. "And I intend to make him want me a hell of a lot more. I'm going to dangle my behind just close enough he'll keep reaching out for it, but far enough away he ll never get a hand hold."

Curt laughed, then let out a spine chilling yell. "Yeoooooo! God damn, I hope the hell you can. Show that rod-sucker up, that low-down, ass-fucking, son-of-a-bitch!"

"Ive always hated men who force their wills on other men," Toye related, summing up his own convictions, his way of life. "Taking, stealing, forcing, demanding. I'm going to put him on his hands and knees. I'm going to make him beg for my money-making tail ... beg but never get."

"You sure got guts," Curt said seriously, patting him on the shoulder. "A male madam running a saloon in this lawless stretch, with young male studs to lure in the loot. I've heard it all now."

"I'll fancy the joint up," Toye rambled on, as idea after idea formed within his cunning brain. "Give it a loud front to draw in the drunks, music, dress you boys in levis so tight you can see the crack of your ass, with fancy silk shirts and shiny boots, and silky kerchiefs about your necks, rings on your fingers, curl-brimmed hats, the works."

"Male prostitutes," Curt said, beaming. "I never thought of it like that, but that's what I am . . . a whore, fucking everything in camp."

"And we'll call it something appropriate," Toye said dreamily, not paying any attention to what Curt had said. "Something that will show up High Afton. Maybe something from Greek mythology."

"The ass-house, maybe," Curt suggested, laughing. "Or the suck castle, or maybe, oh I know . . . the Rod Roulette."

Toye was amused by him, but his mind kept digging for a name.

"The Golden Fleece," he suggested, final. His mind was made up.

"Sounds like a whorehouse," Curt mused.

They turned toward the bunkhouse, anxious to tell the others. And under the vast, star-studded Texas sky, they went silently, each harboring his own secret thoughts, bound now by a mutual understanding, a plan conjured out of their young minds for the future. When they reached the bunkhouse, which now lay dark and silent, Curt paused, lay a hand on Toye's arm.

"I like you, Toye Bell. Thanks for coming to our rescue."

Chapter
Four

Though the boys in the bunkhouse were elated over Toye's proposal to wrest a saloon from Ritt Cameo, they were also dubious, and their hostility to Toye remained. Mainly, it was jealousy. Uneducated, coarse—inferior in every respect to Toye's standards, acutely aware of their shortcomings, their outlaw status while Toye was not thus stigmatized, they constantly writhed under the situation.

Quick of temper, dull-witted, morose and often unwashed, now they thought Toye to be Ritt's favorite, they insulted the newcomer, ridiculed his every action, called him "daffodil" for his cleanliness and fastidious dress. Once they had been neat themselves—freshly shaved and with hair combed—standing by at Ritt's beck and call. They had become slovenly. They smelled of sweat and sex. They continued re tions with older men—men so vile Toye couldn see how they could stand being in the same roo with them—pairing off to bed with them in ac against their youthful natures, made them t more gross. Enduring these unnatural acts—act not in accord with their basic instincts, mad them grosser yet; caused them to be whimsicall moody, unpredicably sullen or violent and con firmed them in their habits of personal filth.

"Sometimes we go to bed with as many me as twelve to fifteen in a day," Curt related t him one day when Toye had mentioned thei dislike for him. "And as many as twenty a night."

"I just wish they would brace up, listen to me, until I can get the saloon built—until I can ge them out of this filth and into clean rooms and clean clothes. I want to help them, Curt, if only they would let me."

"It's difficult for them to trust anyone or anything," Curt explained. "After what they've been through."

"They think I have taken Ritt away from them, that there is something between him and me."

"No, its not that," Curt said. "They want to believe you. Its just that—that Ritt is their last thread. When it is broken all hope will vanish."

"Do you think they will be happier in the saloon, have better spirits?"

"I believe so. Deep inside thy are depending on you to pull them out of their doldrums. So you must not fail them. When are you going to pop the question to Ritt?"

"Soon," Toye replied, glancing out the bunkhouse window to the majestic mansion sitting on the hill. "When I . . . when I have him panting for my behind . . . really panting!"

In the meantime, Toye worked on the saddle. He used imported English leather, from those glistening hides taken from fat, thoroughbred bulls feasting on the lush clover of Scotland, and not from Texas scrags. The leather was finished in deepest black, unadorned by the polishing cloth. That patina would come later, under his own skillful hands, once he had tooled the fretwork of camels parading in whirling paths around the seat back, up and down the thigh pads, and the garlands of fluted lilies that would be embossed on belly bands and bridle. Jokingly, Curt had wanted him to etch a series of pricks and balls bordered by assholes in place of rubies and silver studs, but Toye, most of all, wanted Ritt Cameo to be pleased over his craftsmanship—so pleased that posing his proposition would become an easier task.

When he had the nerve to pose it!

The men in the bunkhouse kept insisting that he get on with the saloon, rather than whiling time away with a useless saddle, for Ritt ne rode anything but men anyway they said. So warm day Toye went.

Carefully selecting his attire, so that he wo appeal to Ritt as much as possible, skin ti levis, boots so shiny he could see his reflectio and a sky blue silk shirt to bring out his glowi skin and eyes, his radiant blond hair, he walk up the hill slowly, confident, leaving Skeeter an Cincy and Dink and Curt sitting on their bunk anxiously awaiting his return and his verdict.

"So you've come crawling back, just as I sai you would," cried Ritt, but with hopeful joy i his black eyes as the Chinese servant Te Ling le Toye in at the front door and escorted him int the spacious living room.

"I have come to report on your saddle," Toy said, fighting to keep his voice normal. He knew he looked radiant in his well selected outfit, a deeply masculine and rugged as he had heard Ritt liked them, his organs swelling the crotch, his silk shirt tucked in evenly so that his broad shoulders and small waist were attractively pronounced. He crossed the room in easy, relaxed strides and stood before Ritt who was seated at a beautifully carved desk, going over a ledger.

Ritt closed the ledger, placed the quill back in its marble holder, and leaned back proudly in his leather swivel chair.

"Well, what have you to report?"

"I've almost completed the embossing . . . a couple more weeks and . . ."

"It's taken you long enough," Ritt remarked, his face twisted with scorn, his black eyes hard, flinty in their luster.

Toye's lower jaw dropped, surprised by Ritt's unexpected turn of mood.

"I want you to be pleased," he said. "And the detail must balance on both sides of the saddle, line for line. Else, it will not be the perfect work I promised."

"Do you always keep your promises?" questioned Ritt who, Toye noticed, looked ravishingly handsome in his black lounging robe bordered in scarlet silk, giving him an even more swarthy appearance, making him look like the reckless, walk-the-plank kind of pirate.

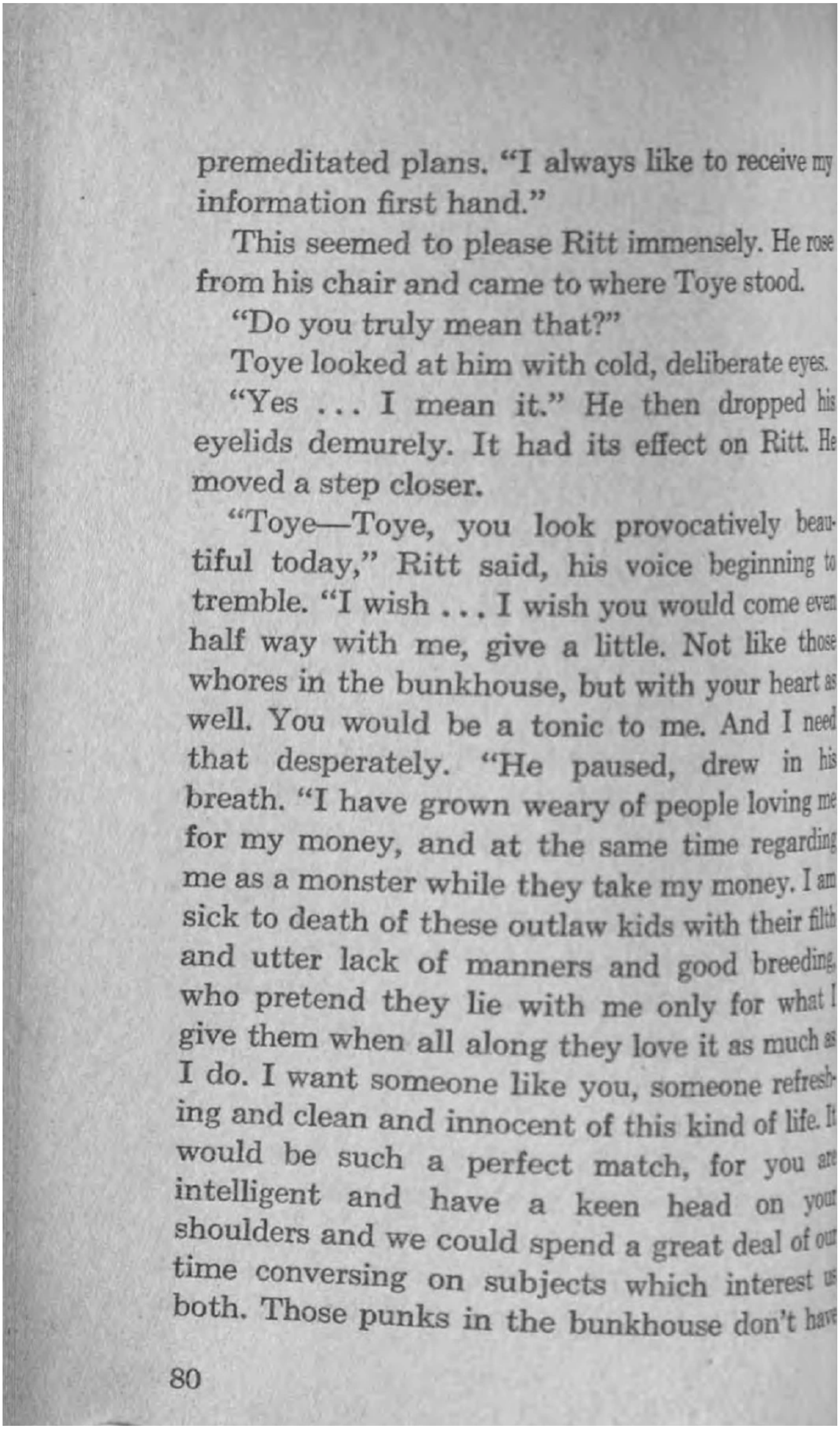
Toye answered: "Always."

"Speaking of happiness, there are a number of ways you could make me happy without tooling me a saddle."

"I know, sir."

"Oh, you do!" He smirked. "Been listening to those scummy sluts in the bunkhouse, haven't you?"

"Idle gossip," Toye said, secretly tickled that the topic of conversation was leading up to his



premeditated plans. “I always like to receive my information first hand.”

This seemed to please Ritt immensely. He rose from his chair and came to where Toye stood.

“Do you truly mean that?”

Toye looked at him with cold, deliberate eyes.

“Yes ... I mean it.” He then dropped his eyelids demurely. It had its effect on Ritt. He moved a step closer.

“Toye—Toye, you look provocatively beautiful today,” Ritt said, his voice beginning to tremble. “I wish ... I wish you would come even half way with me, give a little. Not like those whores in the bunkhouse, but with your heart as well. You would be a tonic to me. And I need that desperately. “He paused, drew in his breath. “I have grown weary of people loving me for my money, and at the same time regarding me as a monster while they take my money. I am sick to death of these outlaw kids with their filth and utter lack of manners and good breeding, who pretend they lie with me only for what I give them when all along they love it as much as I do. I want someone like you, someone refreshing and clean and innocent of this kind of life. It would be such a perfect match, for you are intelligent and have a keen head on your shoulders and we could spend a great deal of our time conversing on subjects which interest us both. Those punks in the bunkhouse don't have an ounce of a brains, and not one idea in their heads. Once you've had sexual pleasures with them then there is nothing else. Just take them, then kick them in the bottom and send them back to their quarters. Seeing you again has brought back my old desire for you. I had almost forgotten how attractive and desirable you are. Seeing you so radiant, here in this lovely room with me, causes me to see just how despicable those male whores are who eat my food, wallow in my bed, take my money."

"You flatter me," Toye said, smiling his most captivating smile.

"Nonsense," Ritt replied, taking his hand. This time Toye did not withdraw, but allowed Ritt the pleasure of casually fondling him. "Anyone, Toye, who is as handsome as you needs no flattery. For it is impossible to flatter one with your looks."

"There are other equally handsome boys," Toye said, in a bid for more praise. Ritt was so devilish handsome when engrossed with those things which interested him most. "Curt and Skeeter and Dink. And they do like you, Mr. Cameo."

"Did they tell you that?"

"No, but I can tell. They live for you, in a sense. You should see the smile that comes over them, the light of happiness in their eyes when you send for them."

Ritt grinned at this, not suspecting Toye's deception, his way of leading up to the all important proposition through the boys in the bunkhouse.

"Well, they have to like it," he said then, with seriousness. He rubbed his cheek with pseudo-regret. "And they deserve no better from me. Sassy little tarts. All of them. It's degrading to have to pay for someone who is that uncouth, that trifling and cheap."

"You are wrong about them," Toye said. "I feel sorry for them because they have nothing to live for. There is nothing for them here, and if they return to the outside the law will get them."

"Hell, its not my fault because they broke the law. They came here of their own free will, dropped their levis for me willingly. I wasn't the first. They knew how to wiggle their behinds, how to turn up a stiff cock. As I told you once before, lawlessness just naturally breeds a looseness in sex. There's nothing they won't do for a buck. But all that is beside the point. They're well paid for their services, a damn sight more than their worth. And though they don't know that I know it they are dropping their pants for every man in Four-Mile-Branch. Every cock in camp, including the Negroes and Indians, has gored out their asses. There's not an ounce of faith in any of them. They ought to wear satin chaps instead of leather ones. Then they would look more like the whores they are."

"I think you're a hound," Toye remarked, but he caressed that last word until it might have been 'darling.'

Ritt grinned at this, flashing even white teeth, and his eyes danced in their twin prisons of light.

"You are a heartless little creature," he said pleasantly. "But perhaps that is part of your charm. There is no limit to what I wouldn't go to if it took that to make you happy."

"You mean you care that much?" Toye asked, leaping now at the plausible opportunity to speak his mind. Ritt was making it so easy for him.

"You could be my world," Ritt said. His black eyes took Toye in from head to heel in a glance that missed nothing, that old impudent glance which undressed him completely, leaving him with a riot of goose pimples. "You are the one person in this stinking hell hole or the whole state of Texas, actually, that could give me even the rudiments of happiness. And God knows I have had my share of failures when it comes to love. If anyone deserved to be loved it is me. I have tried everything and for all my pains I have received nothing but heartbreak and disappointment."

His brow furrowed and he looked tired then, weary of a life too filled with trival novelties and cheap of whims.

"I think if I could lay my head between your smooth, beautiful thighs one time," he whispered gravely, his eyes burning, glowing fiercely, "I think I would come to know in that one instant what I have really been looking for all my life, but have never found. That certain something that is pure and clean and unspoiled, so vastly removed from this filth, these rotten he-whores, who are worse in their heartlessness and crassness then the female ones. For there is a certain swinish comfort in lying with someone who understands you completely and does not condemn you for it, even though they are themselves nothing but illiterate whores. Those punks, so rotten, have the audacity to try and degrade me for wanting them."

The old irritation and antagonism which he roused in Toye, as Ritt railed against the boys in the bunkhouse—when Toye had seen the visible and physical evidence of his methods of torture, was hot in his heart and he wanted to speak sharply—to stand up in their defense. But instead he smiled and the dimples crept into his cheeks.

"Oh, Ritt, if you care so much for me," he cried, turning on all his charm. "If you want me so much, then . . . then there is something you could do for me. And it would make me happy."

"What? Just name it." He leaned even closer, lifted Toye's chin with his hand and looked deeply into his eyes. "If I thought I could make you happy I'd build you a palace."

"Not a palace," Toye said breathless. "But a saloon. I want to run a saloon here in Four-Mile-Branch."

"A saloon!" Ritt cried, then laughed harshly, his eyes blazing. "I thought you were going to make me a saddle then leave. I didn't think you liked it here."

"I've changed my mind," Toye said. "I want to stay."

"And you want me to finance this white elephant of yours," Ritt said. His voice was deceptively smooth, almost silky, but Toye did not notice. "My hard earned cash."

"I'll pay you back. Honest. Every cent."

"Maybe I don't want you to pay back . . . in money."

"But I will," Toye insisted, thinking that everything was going to turn out nicely after all. "I'll make money hand over fist, with all the drovers coming in regularly, and outlaws with fresh loot, and the wagon trains swarming with men with dry throats and sexual hungers."

Ritt's expression changed from mirth to hostility.

"What's this about sexual hungers? You're not turning whore on me too are you?"

"Of course not, Mr . . . er . . . Ritt," Toye cried helplessly, and with purpose. "Nothing like that at all. It's just that I 'd like to build in some rooms on the second floor for the boys in the bunkhouse, recruit a few more, say about twenty more in all, and have them there available at all times for the men who want sex and do not care how they get it."

"God's nightmare!" Ritt bellowed, his face a hideous mask. He pushed back his chair and stuck his hands in his pockets. His face then returned to normal, as if something had been drained out of it and, going to the window, he stood looking out. "I thought this would give me something to hold you with, but now I see that all this is not your idea but the whims of that scum in the bunkhouse. They've put you up to this, another scheme of theirs to bleed these poor devils of their money."

Toye's face went crimson, but he refused to give up so easily. He went to the window and stood beside Ritt, his eyes imploringly on Ritt's chiseled profile, his absent gaze.

"You've got it all wrong, Ritt. They had nothing to do with it. This is all my idea."

"Honest? Can you at least tell me the truth?"

"I am telling you the truth," Toye cried, his hands outspread in the age old gesture of appeal. "But it would be something for them to work for, to believe in, and God knows you know as well as I do that those poor kids have nothing. Animals—living like animals."

"Poor kids!"

"Well, you said yourself that they were—uh—stepping out on you. So this way it would be out in the open. And I could make a mint of money for myself and them . . . and you."

He turned and gave Toye a long sad look.

"And what part would you play my cute little wench?"

Toye blinked.

"I could operate the place. And I could get some decent clothes for the boys, silk shirts, tight jeans, something flashy which will draw attention to their good looks, that would advertise them. I could be the go between, set the men up with dates."

Ritt shrugged.

"A male madam."

"If you want to call it that."

"Ritt laughed bitterly.

"What else *could* you call it." He was silent for a moment, then said, turning his gaze back to the activity outside the window. "I don't like the sound of it. Oh, you'd make money alright. But I just don't want you mixed up in something like that. Those whory punks, I don't care. In fact, I don't give a damn who they sell their behinds to. But you, Toye, no. I do care what happens to you, and I want to keep you pure, if

I'm ever lucky enough to have you. So I wo let you involve yourself with such scum. N thing and you'll be selling your body."

"Never!" Toye assured him. But his patien was wearing thin, and he wanted good news to back and tell the boys. "Oh, Ritt, you can he me so much, if you'll just be sweet."

"There's nothing I like better than being . . sweet."

"Then you'll do it?"

"No."

"Oh, don't be mean. Please, I want th money, and you've got gobs of it."

He smiled faintly.

"It would take quite a sum. And prices ar dropping. Times are hard and money is tight."

"Oh, Ritt, you are teasing me. You know you've got millions."

"Suppose I did let you have the money, what kind of collateral could you give me for my investment?"

"Well," Toye stammered, trying to find proper words. "I won't charge for my saddle. I'll give it to you, and as the money comes in I'll pay you a certain amount each month until the debt is cleared."

"That isn't enough."

"Oh, for God's sake!"

"My, but you do have a hair-trigger temper.

Shrewd—yes, you're a shrewd little bitch. I won't do it."

"But you can have the pick of the boys, anytime you want sex. They'll go, willing and able."

Ritt gave him a hard, searching look.

"I'm not interested in any of your whores."

"I . . . I could come see you often, talk. You said you liked talking to me."

"Talk," he moaned with a disgusted frown. "No, Toye, I don't want that kind of collateral." He turned, looked down at Toye, his gaze quizzical, defiant. "What else have you to offer?"

Well, frightfully, he had come to it at last. Toye drew a deep, prolonged breath and looked up at Ritt squarely.

"I have myself."

Something flickered behind Ritt's gaze but he said nothing.

"You said you wanted me, remember?"

"Yes, I said that," Ritt replied, and there was a hurt look about his downcast face. "The truth at last. Talking love and thinking money, just like a damned woman. Funny," and he laughed softly, as if it all amused him. "Funny that once I begged you to come to me for the pleasure of it, but you turned me down cold. I'm not trying to rub it in. You wouldn't have sexual relations with me for the joy it would give you, but you will have it with me for money—and to help those god damned mangy whores."

"It's all for me . . . and you," Toye said, his voice trembling. He moved close to Ritt, his heart in his eyes, so near he could hear his rapid breathing, could smell the freshness of cologne. "I'm yours if . . . if you still want me."

"You know I want you."

"Then you will give me the money . . . please."

"You know damn well I don't have the guts to say no—whatever your whims. Go ahead and build your saloon and male whorehouse. But I have one demand, one I want obeyed, explicitly."

"What?" Toye asked, completely puzzled.

"You let another man touch you and I'll burn the saloon to the ground and imprison every whore in the place, you included, for running a house of ill-repute."

"Oh, Ritt, don't even give that a second thought. No man will ever touch me . . . except you."

"Make sure you keep it that way."

Relieved, his scheme successful, Toye lifted his eyes, his long curling lashes folding demurely over their emerald radiance. He tilted his chin, his trim lips just below Ritt's, as Ritt swept him into his arms.

"Kiss me," Toye said, unexpectedly, surprising himself with an obvious change he did not admire about himself.

Leaning, Ritt's lips hovered just above his , his hot breath coming in rapid jerks, his hard, powerful body pressing so maddeningly against Toye's chest he could feel the buttons on his coat digging into his flesh.

"No, I won't kiss you," Ritt replied, straightening up, something about his pride ravished, his manhood questioned. "I'll wait for something better."

Chapter

Five

The building of the saloon, under Toye's constant and tireless direction, went rapidly and by the middle of June the boys moved in—twenty of the most appealing young boys in Four-Mile-Branch, including Skeeter Drake, Cincy Lee, Dink Scallan, and Curt Larkin.

The saloon was located in a cottonwood grove at the end of Sioux street, so named because it had once been an Indian trail leading out of the Incan nation, the wanderers in the trail of tears that dispersed various tribes on the mainland of North America.

Taking tips from Te Ling, Ritt's Chinese servant, Toye had the building constructed as nearly oriental in architecture as the crude carpenters could make it. Flat, low roof, a gallery all the way around it, with four bat-wing doors so that it could be approached from all directions. Shallow gangplanks connected to the gallery, each bordered by lamp posts with pine knot gas-lighting, and a row of carraige lamps circled the eaves, giving it the appearance at night of a brilliantly-lit steamboat moored in the shadowy cluster of the ghostly cottonwoods.

The eaves and gallery banisters were painted a dull red, and the clapboard sidding a deep azure. Pale blue louvered shutters closed over the tall windows, beginning at the floor and ending at the ceiling, and the words "Golden Fleece" were painted in Steamboat gothic lettering, bright red and Chinese yellow.

Within, plush drapes hung from the black ceiling beams, paintings of male nudes cluttered the mint green walls, doorways were draped with scarlet beads, and gaudy screens formed semi-dark alcoves. Rattlesnake ferns were planted in enormous marble oil jars and placed at the mahogany staircase, ebony statues rose like petrified giants among the tables and chairs, and the entire bar was a mirror, gilded in marble webbing, and lending to the clients a double image of grandeur.

The outlaws and drovers and wagon train linemen paid homage to it nightly, moving in drunken and solemn droves, like worshippers to the temple of Solomon. Music poured from the doors, smoke formed fantastic hazes, and whoops and yells, cursing, laughter, rose and fell at all hours of the day and night.

In the afternoon the boys, diked out in their neat costumes, tight jeans, loud silk shirts, polished high-heeled cowboy boots, sat out on the banisters in front, idly waiting eager customers who invited them in, bought them iced drinks, and later escorted them up the stairs. And at night they milled from table to table, striking up pleasantly provocative conversation, plying their trade, advertising!

By July the place was booming, and there wasn't a man in Four-Mile-Branch together with many from Jefferson who hadn't at some time paid a visit to the Golden Fleece and lived it up with the wild, young studs. The name soon became a byword, famous in this wild Texas territory which knew not even a faint semblance of law and order; where everything went, drinking, whoring, fighting, even killings.

As more and more men heard about the place, and as new drovers and wagon trains multiplied in numbers, the floors were so jammed at times that many had to occupy the gallerys or to sit out under the cottonwoods to do their drinking and petting. Every form of sex deviation took on major importance and homosexuals from as far away as New Orleans and Memphis came to see, as the name of the Golden Fleece spread, treading its gaudy halls with their flaming entourages.

And because of this unnatural invasion, most of these men—carrying on their persons large sums of money for carnal pleasures that would have to be bought, there evolved a notorious robbery chain within the realm of the lawless. Outlaws complied with many of these mens' wishes in the protective darkness of side streets, behind trees, in vacant, smelly rooms, and when they had shot their sperm, usually knocked their eager paramours in the head or knifed them.

But since there was no law, emotion and crime ran rampant, and no one was truly safe, not even the most hardened criminal. Rape was in evidence also, along with gang rapes and, in a land without women, brawls and knifings and gunfights resulted because of jealous, enraged lovers. Uncouth, thriving on animalism, the instinctive gauge to their primitive personalities, their clannish outlaw motives, the tempers flared, knives gleamed, and guns roared.

The studs, in the limbo of their environment, the realm which suited their natures, had a ball. Admired, sought after, well paid, they took their pleasures with their occupations. And as time passed and they became better known for their choicer sexual accomplishments, their names acquired a semblance of fame. Many were asked for in advance, due to their specialty, and it was not surprising that a number of clients had to be placed on a waiting list.

Money and whiskey and sex flowed in their silvery, shining rhythms, the profits filling the iron safe in Toye's little office, and he doubled the monthly payments to Ritt.

"You've double-crossed me," Ritt said to him one day as they sat in a little private alcove in the Golden Fleece, the elaborately furnished section where Toye, always in colorful array, went over the personal preferences of some client. "We made a bargain and you have failed to keep it."

"I am paying you back every cent aren't I?" Toye explained, pretending annoyance. "And always exactly on date."

"Don't attempt to evade me," said Ritt almost ruthlessly. "You know damn well what I'm talking about. I haven't had your tail once. You keep putting me off day after day, week after week. What kind of a fool do you think I am? You have worn my patience and my endurance down as thin as tissue, and every time I try and touch you squirm like a virgin."

"I thought you wanted a virgin."

"Don't play silly games with me. If this was anybody else but you doing this to me I'd have them tied down and forced."

"And they love you for that kind of treatment," Toye said with acid in his voice.

Ritt hung his dark head, fumbled with his Stetson. Taking a black cheroot from his coat pocket, he lit it and puffed on it for a silen moment. Then he studied Toye from across th shiny table, as if he were a dueling opponent.

"So, you have struck a point," he said finally running a ringed finger along his mustache. "No I suppose they wouldn't love me, but I get what I want just the same, which is more than I am getting from you."

Toye smiled his most captivating smile, dar-ingly.

"You said, Ritt, that you wanted me to love you, and I am doing everything in my power to accomplish that."

"But of course you've failed miserably."

"Well, I do admire you, and I like you immensely, but I would be lying if I said I loved you, and you wouldn't want that now would you?"

"Sometimes a kind lie is far better than the awesome truth," Ritt exclaimed, eyeing Toye suspiciously.

A client came to the table, asked Toye for a full evening with Cincy Lee, paid and went up the stairs. Toye then turned his attention again to Ritt, his voice calm and in deep earnest.

"Don't think I'm not grateful for all you've done for me. I am, Ritt, and I do like you, and if I ever went with any man I promise it will be you. But right now I am so busy with this operation that I can't think or do anything else.

The attendance is becoming alarming, with the wagon trains coming in weekly, and drovers bringing in fresh herds for the markets in New Orleans. But . . . when I do come to you, and I will, I want it to be right, not pointless and hurried. For if I disappoint you the first time then you won't ever want me again, and I would lose face."

There! He had put it very tactfully, and at the same time had Ritt dangling, yearning for more.

"Very well," Ritt answered dispiritedly, getting up from the table and putting on his hat, which he tilted dashingly over one eye. "And you had better be good at it when the time comes. And don't think I'm not keeping tabs on you. I'm watching you like a hawk does a chicken, and if you make one false move I'm going to throw you out of the Golden Fleece on your pretty little ear, and all these satin-chapped studs you keep preened like peacocks. You step out on me one time . . . one time mind you and you'll regret it for the longest day you live. It'll be the costliest piece of tail you've ever sold or given away."

"I wish you wouldn't harp on that one despicable word," Toye said, irritated. "I don't have time to piss let alone sex. Besides, men don't interest me along that line, and you should know that by now. I told you I like you, and in time—but only in time I may grow into what you want me to become. I just can't change overnight. And I was never good at pretending."

"Oh, no," Ritt grunted. "You were pretty good at pretending once. Butter wouldn't melt in your mouth when you were sidling and bridling to win my favors when you wanted money. You were sweet as berry pie then. Now you're hard as nails. So don't give me any more lies about how hard it is to change. You could teach a magician a few tricks along that line."

Toye could not answer. He just sat there, staring at his drink.

"And one more thing," Ritt said, his voice low, but demanding. "One more bit of advice before I let you return to your concubinage. This going around naked has got to stop."

Toye looked up at him surprisingly.

"But I like to go naked. Makes me feel free."

"Would I want my wife going around naked?" Ritt said coldly. "Well, that's the identical way I feel about you. Letting every male in camp get a look at your cock. Oh, don't think I don't know. I hear things. Its positively revolting. Going up and down these upper halls, in swimming at the tower, even riding the horse I gave you naked. And one of the drovers for my Angus stock said just the other day that he saw you out on Laurel Hill sunning back-ass."

"Very well," said Toye, smirking. "If you rather I didn't, then I'll try and stop."

He did like going naked. It had been a fetish with him as far back as he could remember. Feeling free. And when that urge had come, when the stifling invasion of people, events, troubles crowded in upon him like a charging army, he couldn't tear off his clothes quick enough and roam alone, with the air caressing his nakedness, the vast empty sky filling him with rapture, freedom. And it was this about the Golden Fleece at times, dogged by work during the hectic hours almost around the clock, the impatience with rowdy drunks, the noisy brawls, the raking, nerve-shattering laughter, drawing wearily on his nerves and his patience, that would cause him to ask one of the house boys to saddle his black stallion. And he would get away from it all, ride out on Laurel hill and, tearing away his clothes in that unconscious need to tear depression clear of his tortured mind, would bask naked, the warm sun caressing him like molten gold.

And it was this desperate urge, this secret ecdysic narcissism which wound about his nature, this frantic desire to free himself of the drudgery of the Golden Fleece that tore at his nerves, his love for complete freedom and peace, that longing to husk away all responsibilility, on Laurel Hill that spelled out his despair and his seeming doom.

It was on one of those clamorous evenings when the Golden Fleece was so crowded it seemed the building itself would crush beneath the constant movement. Cigar smoke was so thick it gave to the place a ghostly, foggy life of its own, and the asperity of the men, fresh in from driving a herd from Abeline, was rife. They were quarrelsome, eager for fights and quick drunkenness and orgies in rudimentary sex, and all of this together was building into some kind of awesome climax. Too, Curt Larkin, whom he considered his best friend among the lot of studs, had rubbed his fur the wrong way earlier during the day, and he had brooded about it, finding it difficult to shrug off.

The quarrel had been about Ritt.

"You're driving him over the brink," Curt had said bitterly. "If you don't want him why in the name of God don't you let someone else have a chance at him."

"Do you want him?" Toye had flung back, irritated at the mere mention of Ritt, which, ironically, always upset him these mad, frantic days. He liked Ritt himself, better than he liked to admit and it stung his pride realizing that most of his studs wanted him, despite the way Ritt had treated them, the ill-use of their bodies, his lack of respect, his unconcern concerning their feelings.

"Well, its evident that you don't want him," Curt came back tartly, giving Toye eye for eye.

"As long as you dangle your behind in front of him he's going to keep snatching for it. For he loves you to distraction. And just why, I don't know. You are hardly friendly to him, and if I must say, he has been extremely patient with you. It's a wonder he hasn't had you beaten into submission. Well," he murmured, looking very sad and dejected. "I know why he wasn't. He cares too much for you. He told me but a week ago that if he didn't have you soon he would lose his mind. He loves you so much he wouldn't hurt you for the world. So let that be *your* cross, Toye Bell."

"I thought we were going to beat him at his own game," said Toye defiantly, sick to death of Ritt's wants, and these boys' willingness to forgive him almost anything. "No you've turned mush-mouth on me. Have you forgotten so quickly that it was I who lifted you out of that stinking bunkhouse, scrubbed the mud and the scent of these mangy outlaws off you, dressed you in silks?"

"No . . . we . . . I haven't forgotten," Curt answered, hanging his head.

"I don't ask a one of you to do anything except to satisfy our mangy clients. I work harder than any of you, getting in supplies, balancing the books, listening to these filthy clods spitting out what they want, and who with. And I never take any kind of pleasure myself.

You'd all be dead if it wasn't for me, having to pull these drunks off you, putting up with their jealous rages. It's your life. It isn't mine. If you want to wallow with these men that's your business, but don't expect me to do the same thing with Ritt. It's not my nature, and I cannot change."

Curt gave him a deliberate look, one filled with hopeless despair.

"How can you be so inconsiderate? If it wasn't for Ritt where would you be now, or us? And if he didn't love you so much you wouldn't be the stuck up little virgin you are. He'd have taken you long ago, broken you in, like he did us."

"Then why do you uphold him?" Toye spat, irritated to the bone.

"Because . . . because I love him," Curt said, his face filled with sadness, as all light went out of his tear-rimmed eyes. "I know he's treated me like dirt, but there were times, moments when he was the kindest, most considerate man I have ever known. And I cannot ever forget that, the way he used to court me, love me . . . the way he wants to love you now . . . if only you would let him."

"Then why don't you go to him . . . in my place?" Toye suggested, and as bluntly as he could put it. He picked up his hat and gloves, and stalked out, where Dink had his black stallion saddled and waited. But as he rode out of Four-Mile-Branch and toward Laurel Hill, his favorite retreat, he was to be sorry that he had lost his temper with Curt Larkin, and felt something of the love for Ritt he knew Curt felt. And he didn't want to love anyone, especially a man, and least of all Ritt. But there were moments when he could not get his mind off him ... his dashing, reckless manner, his continuous sarcasm, his elaborate dress, always of masculine perfection ... his suave handsomeness, his coquetry, his lovable but damnable charm. No, he didn't *want* to care for this notorious man, this dark gypsy-king of High Afton, but he *did* care at times and he hated himself for it, loathed this new passion that ran through his body in its fantastic rhythms everytime Ritt stared at him with that cat-at-a-mousehole-look, the way he grinned down at him, his shining white teeth visible behind his curved red lips, the way his black eyes always lit up when he ran into Toye unexpectedly, causing him to tremble with emotions he did not know he possessed, making his knees go weak.

"I'll never surrender to him," he muttered aloud as he clucked to his stallion as they circled the watershed of the hill. "For if I do, he'll make me into another Curt or Skeeter or Dink, and heaven forbid, I don't ever want that!"

At the top of Laurel Hill, beneath the gnarled branches of a dead cottonwood tree, he spread out a red Indian blanket, stripped buck-ass (as Ritt termed it) and relished the warm sun stealing over him. The wide, blue Texas sky flew over him, dotted with tiny, white, powder-puff clouds, and he drowsed as he tried to form them into fancy cloud pictures. Languidly, he wished that he could be this clean always, unspoiled by the corruption of man, adrift from the Golden Fleece and what it had become. Premeditated evil had made it trebly evil, and at times like this, basking in purity and cleanliness, pangs of guilt assailed him. Everything about the Golden Fleece now was vile, debauchery, it was a pit of the foulest appetites and he harbored the thought of leaving it forever, just riding out one day with all his money and never coming back; to leave them all, the flaming studs, who did not appreciate him anyway, even Ritt before he chanced to weaken and fall into his salacious and perverted hands.

Weary, free, his nakedness revealing the essence of his beauty, his strength, his well-guarded innocence, he dozed,then slept.

He was awakened by something tickling his ear and, looking up quickly, he saw a tall bronze man bending over him, caressing his ear with a reed of broomweed.

Toye sat up, startled.

"What the hell?"

The man—or boy—laughed, showing glittering white teeth against his lava-colored skin.

"I didn't mean to frighten you," he said. "Just thought I would have a little fun."

"I guess I fell asleep," said Toye, looking around curiously to get his bearings. "The hot sun I suppose. He wiped away the sweat which had beaded up along his arms and chest.

"You were snoring," the boy said. "And I saw that the heat was burning you, so I took the liberty."

"Glad you did," Toye replied. "I might have blistered." He looked at the boy then, for the first time, noticed how tall and dark and lithe he looked standing over him in levis, a deep purple shirt, flame-red kerchief, and black Stetson, its brim curled to a point directly over his startlingly black eyes. Though he was not ravishingly handsome, he was imposing, dark and sinister in an animal way, sleek, smooth, and yet . . . yet surprisingly majestic. For he held himself with great pride, moving, with the slightest rhythm of each sinew, like a panther stealing through velvet leaves.

"Haven't seen you around," Toye remarked, knowing full well that he would have noticed if he had ever been in the Golden Fleece or anywhere in the vicinity of Four-Mile-Branch.

"I just came in with a herd from Fort Worth," he said, smiling so that his long black-lashed eyes appeared on the slant. "We're camped on the other side of the draw. They belong to Mr. Cameo."

"Oh," chirped Toye, thinking bitterly that *everything* belonged to Ritt Cameo! Everything except him. "You're Indian aren't you?"

"I'm a half-breed," he answered, his voice low, guttural, smooth with the passionate song of his primitive nature. "My mother was a Sioux of the Oglala. My father was a white man. I am called Tioga."

Toye introduced himself, told him where he worked.

"I've heard of it," Tioga remarked, coming around the cottonwood and standing over Toye, his thick, saddle muscles spread. "Are you one of the males of pleasure I've heard so much about?"

"No, I operate the place," Toye said, but understood why this beautiful Indian thought so . . . his nakedness, which he did not attempt to cover up.

"You have the most glowing flesh I have ever seen on a male," Tioga remarked, as his black eyes gazed with hunger on every facet of Toye's naked body.

"Is that why you thought me a prostitute?"

"Perhaps," Tioga sighed, his eyes aflame, his voice a series of deep tremors. "I would like to lie with you for my own kind of pleasures, for I have been on the trail for many lonely weeks and my loins burn for you, your molten flesh, as I yearn for a woman."

Toye could say nothing. Many men had tried to lay claim on him, but he had repulsed all of them—rugged drunks in the Golden Fleece pawing him, rubbing him on the behind, courting him in their crude fashions, offering him large sums of money, pleading for his hand, but never anyone like this stalwart Indian, standing with spread legs and wide-set hands above him, his dark and mysteriously savage face framed against the wide blue Texas sky.

"I have never been taken," Toye explained, with tremors running through his every vein.

"Good," murmured Tioga. "I want to be the first."

And before Toye could say no, cry out a protest, his tongue stilled by some strange emotion he could not understand, Tioga, this magnificent dark stranger, was stripping off his clothes. And another moment more and he stood naked as day, his brown, silken-smooth body completely unhusked.

With something over which he had no control, a power, a force greater than all his convictions, Toye lay back on the scarlet blanket, as helpless to battle this emotional situation as a child, and gazed with deep and overwhelming admiration at this dark and senusous savage who faced him.

Never had he seen anyone with such h muscle, such sinewy aspect and yet with su attractive softness. There was no hair on arms and legs and chest, and the long wiry pa of hair centering his loins glistened in the su and curled with the thickness of pelt from naval to his long, heavily-veined cock. His su ple, rounded thighs, as smooth as golden melon were spread invitingly, and the enormity of seeds in their dangling sack lent him an irresist ble force Toye could not contest. In fact, co jured by this spell, the magnetism of this ba barian, the ferocity of him, the strange desire him, every fiber in Toye's being surrendered.

In that moment, as if some great force pulle at them, Tioga sank to his knees in front of him his beautiful, smooth thighs spread, and worke his way up over Toye's body. Out of control o his senses, with everything playing out a sen suous game against his nature, Toye grabbed hi enormous cock and crammed it into his mouth its spongy mushroom head sliding over his licking tongue, and the complete length of it groping until it was buried up to the hilt, the wild dark hair covering Toye's face completely, the huge seeds lying warmly over his chin.

Then Tioga lay on his side, his left leg raised, his round thigh leaning over Toye's shoulder, and with steady frenzy he worked his torso back and forth, and with the silent regularity of a staff in warm oil. Basking in the fine warmth of him, the beauty of his dark belly as he moved with his own joy, thrilling himself each time he thrust deeper into Toye's mouth his hard rod, Toye gripped his inner thighs with both hands, pulling him to him each time he retracted his body, sucking as if he would never get enough, now strangely dominated by this want, this human need he could not understand in himself, but loving it so intensly, so overwhelmingly, he clung to the dark balloons of flesh, pulled at the smooth muscles, clung as he sank deeper and deeper into this beautiful dark pit of consuming hunger for Tioga.

As Tioga's body became more active, rocking back and forth in a frenzy now, he placed a warm affectionate hand on Toye's face and the other along the hollow of his back, gripping firmly but with a touch of love as the hot sperm, flowing wildly through the conduits of his magnificent body, gushed over Toye's tongue, and down his eager throat as he swallowed the spurting liquid of this new and possessing love.

Their bodies were wet with sweat now, and limp, blending there under the bright sun, the Texas sky, and with strong warm hands Tioga pulled Toye up by his arms, embraced him, and they lay basking, each enthralled by the other's body, their faces close, their hearts pounding with the essence of their enraptured attraction.

"You are mine," whispered Tioga, again and again as they lay embraced, until the sun went down over the hill in a wild fanfare of scarlet and gold, until the moon and stars came out festooning draping their world with diamonds, and Toye, helpless, a victim of this wondrous male, his now whatever betide, knew that this was so.

In that one jousting with sex, in the wild and amorous hollow of Tioga's thighs, the enormity of his masculinity pouring over him like some kind of impossible dream, an ecstasy too burdened with meaning for words, Toye turned as savage as his primeval paramour. He would be with him and do with him whatever Tioga demanded, to thrill Tioga for the thrill it gave Toye, and no one he determined—not even Ritt, not even God—could stop him.

So he lay in the star-studded darkness and listened to Tioga's contented breathing, felt, with his warm lips on Tioga's naked chest, the rise and fall of his body, and discovered in his nearness, his overwhelming embrace, this newfound love, this life that made men kill.

Chapter
Six

In the warm, glorious August days ahead, Toye saw much of the half-breed Tioga, in fact taking every opportunity that he could find to spend precious moments away from his work to bask in their love.

Now that this strange element had invaded him, illuminating his life, raising his emotions to startling new delights, new motives, a change he would have abhorred before he met and had sexual relatons with Tioga, he now never questioned. The ecstasy of it, the maddening thrill of groping with his burning lips Tioga's magnificent loins, his face buried in the parted fork of his thighs, was a joy, a flaming and fantastic erotic addiction he could not refuse, no matter what his previous convictions of what he regarded as manly in himself.

There was something about his savage relation with Tioga that told him ultimately it represented an abasement of masculinity a far cry more profound than a thing a man shared with a woman. For here was strength as man regarded strength at its best, the taking and giving of sex, and it multiplied its force in the copulation of two males. The feel of muscle and controlled force, glorified by taking from man, from his lifted and parted thighs the best that was in him, siphoning out of his groin the sweetest nectar of life, the giver of life, swallowing his molten sperm.

And he had only to look at Tioga as he came into the Golden Fleece, parting the bat-winged doors with the casual dexterity of a stealthy savage moving through a covey of leaves, and into the crowded, smoke-filled room with his slow, liquid strides, and he would tremble with such tingling madness he would have to stop what he was doing and be beside the breed every moment he willed.

Why this should be he did not know. But he reasoned that here was man the ultimate, a body as beautiful and flowing as a ship in full sail, as a panther stealing upon its prey, as a stallion in the heated convulsions of sex; a body that glowed with the essence of good health, strength, keyed to maturity, its most divine pitch, a body so majestic that, observed in the throng of the

Golden Fleece's clientele, his would be the only one seen. And Toye had only to look at him, stealing a tremulous glance, and he saw him in his mind, not clothed in tight levis, loud shirt, a silken kerchief, his straight, black hair shining like silk, but unhusked, his brown flesh glowing erotically warm, his hard cock thrust out a foot in front of him, made even more glamorous by his huge seeds, so dark they looked purple, and the nest of black hair that encircled that growth of madness like passion encircling desire.

Nothing mattered now but Tioga. He was Toye's life, all his wants, and nothing else in the world was important nor essential to him . . . the Golden Fleece, Ritt, his studs, the world . . . Tioga was his world, his dark beautiful world that covered him like a cloud, that wrapped him in savage ecstasy, that took him with a haunting thrill he so enjoyed, the likes of which he had never known. There was no one like Tioga in his heart, and as they stole every precious moment they could and, always careful that Ritt Cameo did not discover their secret, Toye became more and more fond of him. In fact Tioga was his food and drink, his sleep, his waking, his thoughts, his dreams. And his every waking moment, and many times during his dreams, was wrapped in the image of his brave, senuous Tioga.

He reserved one of the better rooms for himself on the second floor of the saloon, and gave

Tioga a key. He came and went whenever he pleased, and nothing enraptured Toye more than to come in from a hard night's duty in the saloon and find him ready and waiting, his long lithe body sprawled on the silken counterpane naked, his hands behind his head, his legs crossed in relaxation. Or, he would be on his back, his arms spread eagled, and with a habit of his, his left leg thrust up with a foot over his right thigh, which spread his buttocks glamorously, and in that dark opening of his parted thighs Toye could see a rapturous glimpse of his organ and seeds pressed tightly against the wrinkled silk.

Then, he would turn the key in the lock, go to him quickly and, embracing his warm thighs, sink his lips into his buttocks, and with his hot tongue manipulating the slack shaft, would bring Tioga to life and squirming together they would come to a flaming climax. Then, Toye would slip into his long, dark arms while being kissed, and there lie the night in the balm of Tioga—the never-quiet rustling of his heart, hoping the darkness would never end, that they would live forever in this secret, provocative eternity … that they would become immortal by each others touch.

It was too much. An impossibility, Toye recklessly knew but daring to hope, to dream, and finding it ultimately possible during those hasty, secretive moments snatched in the very face of danger. Moments so utterly beautiful he thought he had dreamed them, for life was too hard, to earnest, too barren of happiness to permit continued possession of such fulfillment, to allow Toye to have in reality what the mind could only imagine.

Through he had been warned repeatedly by the other studs what Ritt would do if he ever discovered them, Toye went daringly, recklessly on, driven by this dark savage who took his pleasures with an untiring warmth, a glowing fire Toye could not resist, and his days became but intervals of waiting and partaking, of dreaming when Tioga would come to him, lie with him, and dreaming still while Tioga was in the act, his hard dark body flowing over his, his huge cock buried in Toye's quivering rectum, covering his body with sex, becoming his world. And only by the intense pain could he fathom that it was real at all, but even that he loved, for it was Tioga who gave him that pain, gave it with the rapture he would give to a kiss, a caress.

The studs loathed him for this sexual intrigue, his fanatic crave for Tioga, whom they envied maliciously. They wanted Toye themselves, the pure, unspoiled beauty of him, his cleanliness, in preference to the quarrelsome outlaws and cutthroats who treated them like slaves, to be used ruthlessly and discarded.

So he went about the Golden Fleece forever on

guard against their informing Ritt, and he w
out of his way to be kind to them, buying th
gifts, suggesting new additions to their att
culling out for them the cleaner, more ch
customers. He knew Ritt might do someth
desperate if he ever found out about Tioga, a
he tried vainly to keep his prize in t
background of his life, to reveal him only as
casual client when Ritt frequented the saloo
which was entirely too often to satisfy Toye. I
longed to show Tioga to the world, to be wi
him constantly, to live with him if possible, b
instead he went out with Ritt in order to kee
his little snatches of bliss safe and secure f
himself.

They went to the Cattleman's Theatre, int
Jefferson in Ritt's elegant surrey, boating o
Caddo Lake, riding the hills where Ritt's vas
herds grazed in purple clover flank deep, an
though Toye did not like to admit it to himsel
Ritt could be a barrel of fun. He knew all th
gourmet places to dine, joked constantly just t
hear Toye laugh, pinched and petted and courted
and was both ironic and sarcastic in a very
pleasant way, and he was always immaculate in
his dress, white Panama suits and wide, white
Stetsons, shiny black cravats and gleaming
embroidered waistcoats, varnished boots and
gloves as soft as goose-down. But his charm lay
in his tease, his endless flattery, not to mention

his nearness, his handsomeness, and Toye made the most of the situation, sharply alert for his own personal safety, despite his yearning hunger for Tioga.

"I don't like him," Tioga later mentioned, after seeing Toye and Ritt coming in the saloon from a late night buggy ride. "He sees you too much. And when a man seeks out a boy of pleasure too much he is wanting something."

"Maybe he does want me," Toye remarked, laying his tired head on Tioga's broad chest. "But he'll never have me. No one is ever going to have me except you . . . ever."

"I'm going to kill him someday, just the same," Tioga warned, lifting Toye's face to his and kissing him fondly. "You are mine, and the man who touches you dies."

Toye trembled at this warning, for he realized with terror in his heart that Tioga would. And he knew also that Ritt Cameo was an excellent shot. He had been in numerous duels before and he was still alive to prove his ability with firearms.

"Please . . . don't do anything to endanger yourself," Toye insisted, with an awesome dread in his heart." You're all I have. All I'll ever want. You're the only thing in my sordid life worth living for, fighting for, dying for. If you go, you will take everything."

"I will live," Tioga assured him." My love you will not fail me."

But . . . oh . . . how tragically it did.

* * *

It was on one of those early fall evenings w the smells of death, of dying things floats with, t wind blowing, leaves falling, twigs snapping, a Toye had ridden up to High Afton to settle account with Ritt. It was his final payment, a he was elated for it would mean he would at l be free of Ritt's tyranny, his demands. Now, could be with Tioga as often as he pleased, a he could tell Ritt to go to hell. And he thoug how pleasant that would be, with the sava courage of Tioga to back him up, to stand b tween him and the perturbation of the world.

He found Ritt drunk.

He was seated in the library near one of t tall, many-paned windows, the multi-color reflections falling faintly on his tense bewilder face.

He glanced up at the sight of Toye, his re rimmed eyes swollen from whiskey and tea And he said briefly, final, as he sniffed.

"So . . . you've gone and done it at last. Yo little whore!"

"Done what, what have I done?" Toye denie everything, hoped and prayed that his innocent expression did not give away his guilt.

"Wallowed with another man! Thanks to Curt Larkin."

"Did that bastard dare?"

"He dared!" Ritt bellowed. "Hell yeah he dared. A most courageous fellow. Its a wonder I didn't strangle him with my bare hands when he told me. I went into such a rage!"

"It's all lies—lies!"

"To hell it's lies! Do you think he'd have the nerve, to come and tell me such a thing as this, without it being the truth? I ought to pin a medal on him. Telling the truth is such an oddity these days."

Toye stood above him, trembling, his hands thrust nervously into his levi pockets.

"Why wouldn't he, that Curt? He's so jealous over us, Ritt. He wants you. He's so madly in love with you he can't see straight. He'd do anything to degrade me, to take me away from you."

"My dear little tart," Ritt said, giving a sardonic laugh, a laugh so hateful Toye felt the physical shock of it." How can he take you away from me? We've never been together, my dear. At least I've had *him*, which is more than I can say for you. All I've gotten out of you is promises . . . promises."

"Oh, Ritt, I do like you," Toye stammered, knowing that he was cornered at last, and uti ing all his guile to make amends. "If only- only you . . ."

"If only I wasn't what?" cried Ritt, looki sadly up at him, and with a gaze that tore way through Toye's soul.

"If only you weren't so—demanding."

Ritt glared at him in mock surprise.

"Demanding! My God! I have the kindest hearts. I loved you so much all I ever wanted do was pet you, spoil you, buy you useless gift make a lot over you, show you off to the world."

He wanted to do that? Toye asked himself. Wh —why that was what he wanted to do to Tiog show him off to the world, let everyone kno how much he loved him, how much he genuinel cared. He loved Tioga to distraction, and he ha a fumbling wonder: did Ritt love him as much?

"If I could have had my way with you," Rit went on, sniffing spasmodically, "there's nothin I wouldn't have done for you. And I could hav loved you so much, if only you had let me. I coul have loved you more than any man ever loved woman. You are nothing but a brassy tart, trollop but I do love you, as I would love woman."

"You can . . . you can!" Toye cried, his hanc over his trembling heart." You can if you promise one thing . . . please!"

"I'm tired of your promises, and me promising you the world for absolutely nothing in turn. I'm bone-tired, sick to the hilt.”

“But you don't know what I'm going to ask of you,” Toye cried, leaning over him, an insistent hand on his chair.

Ritt looked up at him defiantly, his gaze like ice.

“It's obvious enough. You are going to ask me to leave that heathen half-breed you wallow with alone, in exchange for your tail.”

Toye drew in a sharp breath, as the truth struck home.

“Oh, Ritt, please!” he implored, sinking to his knees before him.” Don't hurt him. I beg of you. Don't kill him, please don't; it would break your heart if you broke mine, and you don't want that, do you?”

“No,” he murmured, and he began to cry, his face buried in his huge hands, his shoulders trembling. “Whatever untold miseries you've caused me, I couldn't endure hurting you. I love you that much. Though God knows why I love you like I do. You have never given me an ounce of love in return.”

“But I will, Ritt, I will, honest. I'll do anything you ask of me . . . if only . . . if only you'll spare Tioga.”

Ritt lifted his tear-rimmed eyes and gazed at him, their lights almost pleasant.

"So that's his name, is it? I've never hear before. What's he got that I haven't?"

Toye returned his gaze, as he tried to think.

"Oh, Ritt," he answered, his voice shaky.' don't know. He's so dark, so wild, so full glowing warmth. He isn't like us, not like yo He's kind and thoughtful and good and yet, has the strength and ferocity of an animal, and feel all this when he touches me. What he tak hold of he finishes, and he will finish me with h love. He has made me into what I am and now am savage too, a part of him actually, a part him, his ardour, inside me."

"Don't speak like that!" Ritt cried, his face grave frown.

"Why?"

He looked away, his eyes still filled with tear gazed at the colored panes dully.

"I cannot endure you speaking of love, if it not for me."

"I didn't mean to hurt you."

"I know, you're like a greedy child. You thin only of yourself."

"That isn't true. Why, I think of you ever s often. You know that."

"Hardly, since you're so occupied with tha black heathen. He probably has the cock and seeds of a stallion, and I can well imagine how rough he is on you. Merciless, as every Indian is merciless in his passions. I bet he doesn't give one thought to your happiness. He only takes, and I wouldn't hurt you for the world." He began to sob anew, and he shook as if he was in a raging wind. "I'd be so kind to you. I wouldn't hurt you at all, and he does hurt you, doesn't he?"

"I . . . well, he . . ."

"No lies."

"It's a different kind of hurt," Toye said, trying to put such feelings into words. "But you can endure it when you know you are making him happy, thrilling him. Love and compassion take the hurt out."

"Oh, God!" Ritt stormed, bringing his hand down against the chair rest." Love and compassion! Saints preserve me! I bet he don't even know the rudiments of love and passion. All he wants and cares about is to get his sperm into your guts, or his cock into the roll of your tongue, shoving it down your throat. He's a rank animal, what I've seen of him, and deserves no better than a flea-bitten squaw, not your fine golden body, my dear, not the kind of pure love you could give a man."

"He loves me, Ritt," Toye declared, saying that one word so endearingly, for he knew that Tioga loved him, felt it, was moulded into it by his hard, dark body evoking their flaming passions, melting them both as one with his love.

"Be it so," Ritt fumed, wiping his eyes with a clean handkerchief. He took a decanter from th nearby desk, poured him a drink, sloshing som onto his immaculate white suit. "Maybe you want his negroid passions, his battering ram cock. Maybe you like wallowing with filth, with an animal. But I should kill him for what he had done." He gulps down a drink." Spoiling you for me, taking you first. Now you are dirty and unclean, torn, ravished, and I might add raped, for I am sure it was subconscious rape in your mind."

They were silent then for a moment as Ritt sipped his drink, and Toye considered the two men. They were both rugged to the extreme, as masculine as men could be made, and yet they were vastly different in their approach—Tioga demanding with a touch, Ritt with sharp words, threats. Tioga took him on Laurel Hill in the fields of bracken, like an animal in bestial copulation while Ritt had only discussed it. Yet, somehow strangely, the two men were alike, the only two men in his life, so much alike in fact that he concluded they could be fast friends, if rivalry did not lie between them. And he wondered for the first time how Ritt would look naked. He had always been so immaculate in his dress, so suave, that he could not imagine him any other way. While with Tioga, even when he was dressed, his mind conjured the savage picture of him naked, the dark powers his nakedness brought to his thoughts, his senses, the persuasive forces, the ferocity of his maleness which caused Toye to surrender so helplessly. Tioga had but to lift a hand and he would go running into his arms, and despite all Ritt's threats and demands he would not budge an inch.

Yet now, seeing Ritt drunk, morose and in tears, sad, his powerful body encased in fine linen, his profile like the head of a prince on a silver coin, he wanted him to touch him. Somehow, as never before, he wanted to lay his head in his lap, feel his huge hands on his hair. He wanted to bow to him with warmth of friendship, not love, nor passion—not like he wanted Tioga, his soft ferociousness, and he felt sorry for Ritt now for wanting him so much all these hectic months, and how easy it would have been for him to have complied. He had gone into the arms of Tioga a total stranger, and he had refused Ritt who had loved and admired him for what he was. And he wondered forlornly if he had given himself to the right man. Had Tioga robbed him? Taken the treasure rightfully Ritt's?

And he cried out defiantly, like a child who has lost its toy, and is in desperate need of a substitute.

"Ritt, do you hate me now—now that you know about me and Tioga? Do you want to get even?"

“No, I don’t hate you,” he whispered, tal
through his whiskey glass.” How can I hate y
when I love you so much? You don’t love
hate that easily. Both come slow with me and
profound. It takes me a long time to fall in l
and a long time to fall out, and both have th
little miseries. That is the main reason I h
losing you, for I know I will be in agony
months, will be unable to eat or sleep—sad
the point of grieving despair . . . and drowni
that misery in drink.”

“And you love me so much?”

“I love you so much I would kill for you. Is
that enough? Or do you want to see Tioga k
me, if it comes to a duel? So you and he can
scott-free, to gobble at each other’s cocks as lo
as you please.”

“You know I don’t want that,” Toye tri
desperately to explain, still on his knees, lookin
with imploring eyes at Ritt who was sodden no
hes head wobbling faintly.” I don’t want eith
of you to die, to go off shooting it out like
couple of crazy outlaws.”

He glanced at him with dull, lacrymose eyes.

“What do you want?”

“Happiness I suppose.”

“You could have had that with me. I kno
what happiness is and I have the means to give i
to you.”

"Oh, I don't mean money, gifts. I don't need that. Money was never important to me."

"Oh, don't give me that!"

"It's not money with me and Tioga and we are happy."

There was a terrible glint in Ritt's eyes.

"My but that stung. Do you know what happiness is? No you don't. You think happiness is letting this Tioga fuck you in the behind, or hanging onto his hairy tool. Toye, tell me, do you love Tioga? Really I mean?"

Toye was silent for a moment.

"Yes, I love him, and he loves me."

"Prove it."

"How?"

"Give him up."

"Give him up!" Toye's lower jaw dropped, his mouth a round O.

"Yes, my love, give him up completely. That would be proof wouldn't it?"

"But why?"

"For his safety."

"But you promised," Toye cried, his face twisted with pain.

"You said—you said you would not engage him in a duel."

Ritt tried to smile, his lower lip sagging.

"I said no such thing. I merely said I could not endure making you unhappy."

“But that is the same thing.”

“No they are entirely different. I could kill him and make you happy at the same time, if you would only let me, only get him out of the way so you won’t be tempted by his savage charms.”

Toye lifted himself from his knees, stood to his full height and glared down at him.

“You’re drunk!”

“Indeed I am,” Ritt snorted, lifting a hand mockingly, his black brows twisted into a frown. “And before the day is out I’ll be flat on my behind. Just stick around and watch.”

“No, thanks,” Toye bellowed, irritated that things were not going to his liking. “I’ve got better things to do.”

“Like what?”

“Tioga!”

Suddenly at that, Ritt sobbed. He rose and, jerking Toye to him, embraced him with emotions bordered on madness.

“Don’t you dangle that black heathen in front of me, you little slut!” he cried vehemently.” I want you more than anything in the world, But I will not share you with a half-breed savage Indian—understand?”

“I will not give him up then,” Toye said icily, playing out his luck to dangerous lengths, the hunger in his heart for Tioga burning within him all the more fiercely now, that he might lose him completely. On the swift tide of his emotions he saw the face of Tioga bending over him instead of Ritt, felt his strong bronze arms around him, pulling him close, became hypnotized by his hot burning lips.

"You will give him up . . . or he dies!" Ritt swore, pushing Toye away from him and holding him at arms length. "When you go back and wallow with him tell him this for me. Tell him to be waiting on Laurel Hill at midnight. I've stood all I can stand. When it is over then I'll take you back—this time with force—whenever and how I choose, if necessary."

Chapter Seven

Toye made his way through the dewy stubble, under the crouching limbs of the dead cottonwood where he and Tioga had first come together on Laurel Hill, and under the pale luminescence of the moon and discovered Tioga there alone, sitting on one of the gnarled cottonwood knees which thrust itself out over the crevice of the hill.

At the sight of him, where Curt Larkin told him he would be waiting, his heart skipped a beat, realizing now that he could lose him, lose him forever by Ritt's jealous hand, and for this self-same reason he loved him all the more, and everything about him multiplied its value in his eyes.

"A penny for your thoughts," Toye said lowly, coming directly up to him and hugging his face to his thighs.

"I was thinking about you," Tioga answered, his voice but a whisper in the luminous night.

"What about me?" Toye questioned, still standing.

"Our life together, what it would be like without you, the emptiness, the grief, the happy hunting ground that would be no happy hunting ground."

"You've sensed it too," Toye declared, feeling the ominous pressure of their love, their physical hungers, the loneliness that would dominate his life if Tioga were to be no part of it. And he realized painfully that if Tioga was to live, that if Toye would in the future share a life with someone else . . . and oh, what a dreadful thought . . . he would have to give Tioga up. This would be their last night together, for although agonizing the predicament, it was far better that Tioga live and Toye not have him than to weaken and have him for but a brief moment, then lose him forever. And he possessed, even with this frailty of hope, a far away dream that maybe, sometime in the future he might find Tioga again, have him for his very own.

"I've sensed so many things lately," Tioga said, taking him by both wrists and pulling him down to him. "An awesome dread, a shuddering of my heart that something is going to happen, that I will lose you, and I don't want to lose you, Toye, my beautiful boy of pleasure. I want to keep you forever, your body, your love, your heart locked in the beating of my heart. Now, now, something is coming between us, a dark shadow stealing over us. I know not what it is. Yet I know that it is there. And if I lose you, if I cannot share with you my life, then I don't want a life. I shall want to die, and my body thrown in the black pit at Squaw Head Rock with those many others who have become infected with the sickness of the dying heart."

"Oh, don't say that, Tioga," Toye cried, the horrid picture of it etched vividly on his mind. "Not your body. Not your beautiful body lost in darkness, broken, mutilated. I could not bear it. I wouldn't want to go on living if something dreadful like that happened to you. I would go mad, stark raving mad if you became hurt in any way, a bruise, a blister, a cut, let alone if you should die and leave me forever in the darkness that would follow."

"Then what is this thing that comes over me?" asked Tioga with deep seriousness. "Why do I feel this way? Why does this shadow follow me like a cloud going over the meadows? I only want to live and love you, to have your body when I am hungry, to rest beside you when I grow weary for sleep, to feel you in my heart with each echo of its beat, to see your beauty in my thoughts, even when you are not with me."

Toye cringed at his words, the sound of his lovable voice, knowing that he would never hear such words again, that he would never know the feel of his strong, bronze arms, the rapture of his lifted thighs, his burning lips on his. And because of this, the end to something that was intensely beautiful, provocative—the fatal climax to something so essential to him, as essential as breathing, eating, sleeping—he buried his face in Tioga's lap more deeply, his grasping hands clinging to him, as if his fine body was a lifeline thrown down to him in some deep dark pit, and he must climb to safety, or perish in the attempt.

It killed him to say what he came to Laurel Hill to say, tore out his paining heart, like sharp claws into raw flesh, that he would have to end everything tonight for Tioga's sake, break off their relation, give him up, as Ritt had demanded, or else see him die, vanish from his arms and his lips forever.

"Tioga, there is something I must tell you," he said at last, pondering, and for the hundredth time since he left Ritt that afternoon, that it would be far better to pan the whole thing off as a lie than to speak the truth and have Tioga go charging at Ritt in a killing rage.

"What?" Tioga asked. He never wasted words.

"This is the last time I can see you," he muttered an answer, his face still buried in the warmth of flesh where it could never be buried again. "I am going to Ritt, live with him at High Afton."

There was silence for a tense moment, and the hands that gripped Toye's shoulders so warmly, so affectionately, stilled, as if all life and warmth fled out of them.

"I don't believe you," Tioga answered finally, his low voice grinding with thwarted passion.

"It is the truth," Toye said, lifting his head a little, but not daring to look into Tioga's fierce eyes. "I should have told you long ago, but tonight, tonight when Ritt said he wanted me I could put it off no longer. So I had to tell you now, tonight, before it was too late."

More silence.

Lifting Toye's face with both hands, cupping his head like a child caressing a pet puppy, he held him thus for a long time, just looking down into Toye's moonlit eyes.

"Toye Bell, why are you telling me this? Why are you breaking my heart?"

Toye choked.

"I never wanted to do that, Tioga, honest," he murmured, loathing himself for having to say untruths to Tioga, to read that lost, hurt look in his gaze and know how the lies were hurting him. God would punish him in hell for this, he realized painfully, but he would have to suffer those lies, endure them for eternity upon an eternity of hellfire and brimstone, and woul suffer them gladly, so that Tioga would be saf alive. "I want you to go away from here, Tiog tonight. Leave Four-Mile branch, the Golde Fleece, leave it forever, and never come back."

Death burned in Tioga's downcast gaze, an their lights shown like that of an animal mortall wounded, and was in panic for its own safet from further attack, the saddest sight there i ever to see, the brutality to the weak, the hostil dominating the forgiving, the coldness triumphant over the heart.

"I won't do it," he cried, the sound of his cry like one pleading for his own life. "I can't do it, even if you want me to. I can't leave you knowing I can never put my hands on you again, ever. I can't just go away, into some unknown place among total strangers without you there with me. If I cannot have you and this Ritt Cameo must then don't make me go away, don't make me leave so that I can never look at you again. If I cannot have you, then I cannot have you, but at least here I can still look at you now and then, maybe speak, see you from a distance and know that you are well."

This wrung Toye's heart, became sharp agony to the core, and he felt ashamed, degraded, diminutive before such loyalty and honor, such capability of love—asking nothing in return, the true gauge of love itself, the essence of true love, the only love there is. And seeing this, feeling it so strongly in the warmth of this truly kind person, unselfish, humble, loving him so much he was content only to see him now and then, to glimpse him from a distance, Toye realized he could not give him up. Love for Tioga in return was too strong, too imposing, too overwhelmingly in demand for Toye to just walk away and leave him forever and never, as Lot, look back. He would look back, and grieve and pine and turn into a pillar of salt, yet saltless flesh, a man of stone, if he could not have Tioga as a part of his life, the positive form to his own negative force, the one element which, blended with him, could ever form the whole.

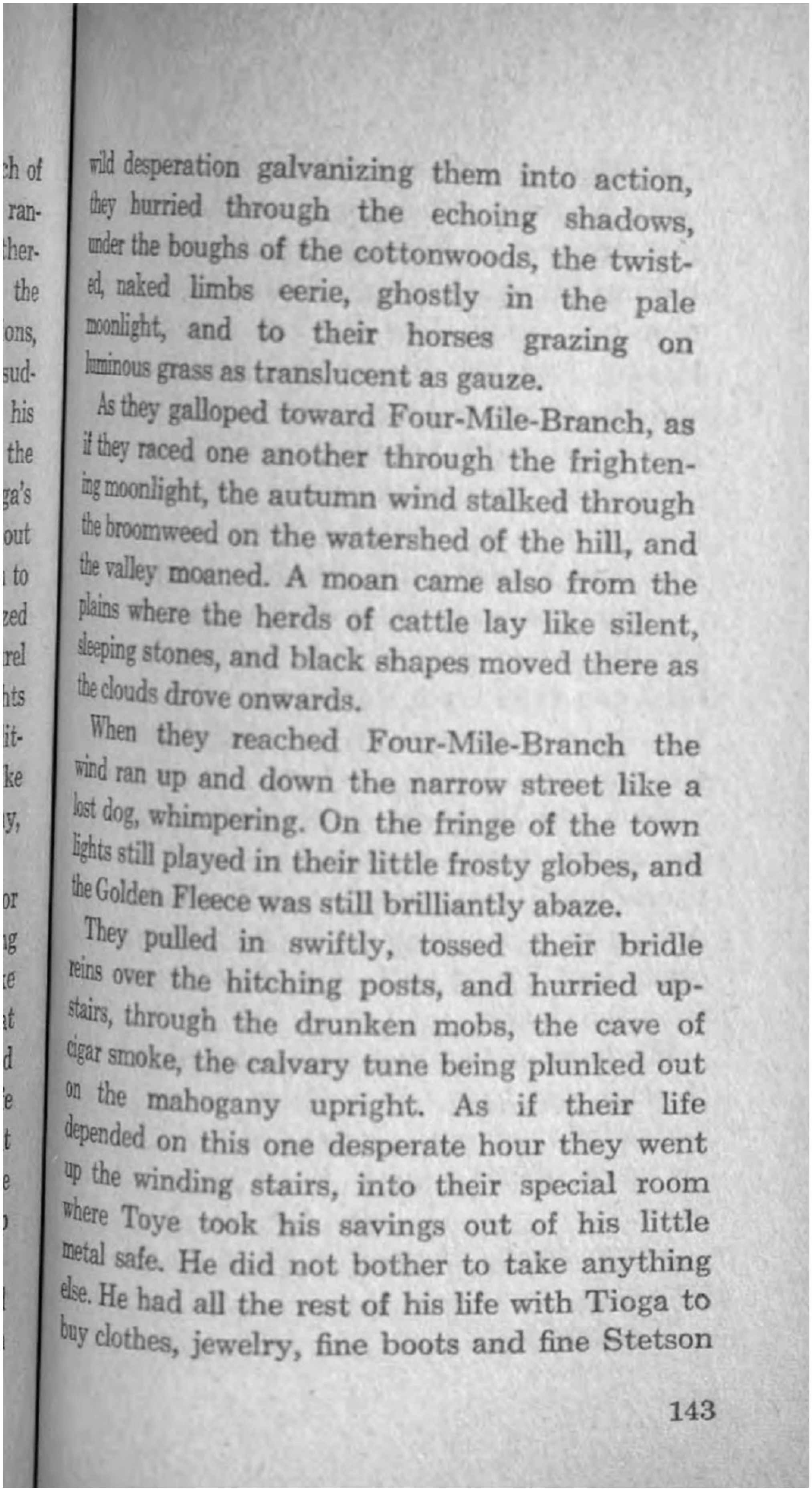
Lifting himself up, he flung his own body into Tioga's outstretched arms, and they clung there in the ghostly moonlight, the dewy cold of autumn but a fragmentary chill compared to their glowing warmth, the fires which burned between them in wild, fantastic flames.

"Oh, Tioga!" he cried helplessly, as all strength, all precaution fled, his safety from Ritt's tyranny of secondary importance compared to his desperate and fanatical love for Tioga. "It's been lies! All lies! And I can't lie any longer. I cannot give you up! Even if he kills you I will not give you up, not till the last moment, not till they lower you in the grave.

some laughter, the noise, the filth, the sten
unwashed bodies, the mangy clothes, the
cidity of the upper rooms after sex, the smot
ing atmosphere of such profligate life,
imprisonment of its sensualism, the raw passi
the cheating, the debauchery. He too was
denly tired of Ritt's threats, his demands,
wrongful hold on his life, his freedom, of
agony of living day by day in terror of Tio
being killed; hated most of all this land with
law, where outlaws moved in absolute freedom
rape, plunder, and kill. Lifting his head, he ga
quietly across the broad landscape of Lau
Hill, saw the winking pin-points of amber lig
that was Four-Mile-Branch, picked out the gl
tering facet that was the Golden Fleece, and li
Tioga too, he wanted desperately to break awa
to security and freedom.

Yes, Tioga was right, there was nothing f
them here. It had taken this wild and maddeni
night, his love, to open his eyes at last, to mak
him see this sordid life as it really was, a life th
was no more a part of himself than if he ha
suddenly alighted on another continent. His li
was with Tioga, the half-breed, wherever tha
life happened to be, and Four-Mile-Branch, th
Golden Feece, Ritt, even God could not kee
him from sharing that life with him.

Swiftly now, as if the whole of their lives had
been thawed into something of utter sweetness,



wild desperation galvanizing them into action, they hurried through the echoing shadows, under the boughs of the cottonwoods, the twisted, naked limbs eerie, ghostly in the pale moonlight, and to their horses grazing on luminous grass as translucent as gauze.

As they galloped toward Four-Mile-Branch, as if they raced one another through the frightening moonlight, the autumn wind stalked through the broomweed on the watershed of the hill, and the valley moaned. A moan came also from the plains where the herds of cattle lay like silent, sleeping stones, and black shapes moved there as the clouds drove onwards.

When they reached Four-Mile-Branch the wind ran up and down the narrow street like a lost dog, whimpering. On the fringe of the town lights still played in their little frosty globes, and the Golden Fleece was still brilliantly abaze.

They pulled in swiftly, tossed their bridle reins over the hitching posts, and hurried upstairs, through the drunken mobs, the cave of cigar smoke, the calvary tune being plunked out on the mahogany upright. As if their life depended on this one desperate hour they went up the winding stairs, into their special room where Toye took his savings out of his little metal safe. He did not bother to take anything else. He had all the rest of his life with Tioga to buy clothes, jewelry, fine boots and fine Stetson hats in that fine land of freedom whither t now hurried with eager, bursting hearts. moment more and they were in their saddles a tearing through the driven wind to where th were not certain. Nor did they care. They we leaving Four-Mile-Branch and the Golden Flee and the ugly, stinking world of the outlaws f freedom, security, safety, in each others arms.

In their frenzied anxiety, they did not s Curt Larkin ride out of town on a dappl Apaloosa, headed in the direction of High Afton

If they had seen they would not have notice People in love are blind to their surrounding Just one more horse, one more cowpoke as far a they were concerned. When they did notice i was too late.

At a fork in the road, where one to the righ led to the stately grandeur of High Afton, tw horses and riders loomed up out of the shadows A shot rang out, echoing through the cold darkness. And Tioga, with a muffled cry, tumbled from the saddle.

His heart in his throat, his every nerve flaming through his body, Toye drew in rein sharply, leaped off, and ran to where he lay. He was on his back, spead eagled, in a pool of his own blood.

Nervously he dropped to his knees, bent over him.

“Tioga! Tioga!”

Tioga opened his eyes, their dull lights now flooded with moonlight, and fixed them feebly on Toye's tearful face. Lifting a quivering hand, he caressed Toye's cheek, ran his fingers over his trembling lips.

"Throw my body in the deep pit . . . at . . . Squaw Head Rock," he murmured tiredly, his voice dying, his mouth filling with blood.

"No! No! Don't die!" Toye cried, trying to lift him up into his arms. "There's no life . . . without you . . . nothing!"

"You are mine," Tioga whispered, his voice as soft as the evening breeze out on Laurel Hill.

He went limp in Toye's arms, his head falling backwards, his hand dropping away.

He was dead. And something in Toye died, too, at that moment. Something that would never come back to life again. And an old irony stirred: he had come, unknowingly, to Four-Mile-Branch to fill an emptiness in his life and that emptiness had been filled. It had been filled to the brim and overflowing, had enriched his being to the core, had given him true love and true happiness, if but for a little while. It had taught him how life was, the bitter with the sweet, and now he understood for the first time in his life how the game was played.

Tioga had changed him as no other man could. Now that he was gone from him, forever, he changed to his old self, that self before he had ventured to Jefferson, before he had set up ca in this crazy, half-world.

“Good-by, Tioga,” he whispered, kissing on the forehead. “You were the first, and are the last.”

“That breaks my heart,” cried a voice, Toye looked up as two shadows fell across and Tioga's outstretched body.

It was Ritt Cameo and Curt Larkin.

“I had to kill him,” said Ritt. Then he let a tired, weary sigh. “I had to kill him . . . so t I could live myself.”

He bent down, caught Toye by the arm aff tionately, tried to pull him up.

“Come. Let's go home . . . home to High Aft . . . where you belong.”

“Don't touch me!” Toye screamed, shrinki back in despair and rage, preferring death hi self rather than have another man touch him . since Tioga.

Surprisingly, Ritt drew back, but with see ing impatience.

“Don't ever touch me!” Toye screame stricken with untold grief. “Understand . never! If you ever do I'll kill you . . . unde stand!”

Ritt, motioning for Curt to follow, made h way to his horse, and his muted silence as h went, leaving Toye, his body lying over that Tioga, to his lost love and his grief, and as h went there was something about his expression in the moonlight, the set of his glittering black eyes that told him he knew Toye would kill . . .

The
will
“
Tio
stee
tinu
pres
the
ton
“
excl
to h
feel
whe
roo
for
goi
it b
spa
“
whi
forg
T
hea
“
was
him
him
“
him

Chapter
Eight

Toye buried Tioga out on Laurel Hill, the site of their love's spawning. The place of their first and last meeting, which was appropriate, he knew. He did not have the courage, nor the heart to do as he had willed, to throw his beautiful dark body into the pit at Squaw Head Rock, to give him away to decay and ruin—not that wondrous body which had held so much love, so much meaning for him.

Blind with tears, he dug the grave himself and, when he was finished he lay Tioga's body in the scarlet Indian blanket they had lain upon during the act of their first love spawning, covered him, and placed him in the dark hole that would forever be his home. And his tomb would be the dead cottonwood tree, and the broomweed would cover him, sigh in the torturing winds, and the hawks would sit in the naked branches of the cottonwood and gaze down in silence and wonder, and they would be lost, as he would be lost, through the death of Tioga, the beautiful son of an Oglala squaw and a white man whose name and whereabouts Tioga never knew.

When he had finished patting the soil in place, and covering the grave with small stones, Toye tossed the spade over the crevice, and went to his horse where he had his belongings packed, ready to ride out of Four-Mile-Branch forever.

Nothing could stop him from leaving. He knew that now, not even Ritt. His mind was made up, and once made up, he would not change it.

As he put his booted foot in the stirrup and lifted his weight into the saddle his attention was automatically drawn to the valley, to the billowing of flames and black smoke that mushroomed into the dawn sky, and he sat watching it for a timeless time, realizing, almost with gladness in his heart, what it meant.

Ritt Cameo had fired the Golden Fleece, in his endless revenge, his thwarted rage.

Well, let him rage on. He had done to him what he wanted to do, and his burning of the Golden Fleece could not hurt him. In fact Ritt could not hurt him any longer, for his taking Tioga's life was the worst he could do and he had done that already.

Nothing now could hurt nor harm him. And he felt proud and secure by this new knowledge.

He remained on Laurel Hill until the flames had lowered the foundations to embers, the black smoke drifting into the pink rays of dawn, taking with it the stench and degradation of the place, the drunkenness, the vile sex charades, the brawling, the killings. It had all gone up in the smoke and flames and, suddenly, he felt fresh and clean again and new, washed of all his sins.

Then, he gave one long look at Tioga's grave, whispered farewell, and rode out of this land that had given him both happiness and sorrow.

At Swanson's Landing he left his horse, took up his bag of money and his belongings and bought a ticket aboard the "Alida," the same sternwheeler which had first brought him into Jefferson and to all his heartbreak and despair.

He went up the gangplank slowly, thinking as he went the whole mad scene, from beginning to end, wondered how he had ever been snatched into it, beguiled into it in the first place. Then he thought of Tioga, and he knew why. Love, want, the hunger for a beautiful body and the glorious rapture that went with it. And he knew that he would have stayed on had Tioga lived, would have put up with the debauchery of the Golden Fleece, Ritt, anything, just to be near him.

Now, it no longer mattered.

But at the top of the gangplank stood R
waiting for him.

He went up to him slowly, reluctantly, hat
him in his heart for taking Tioga from him, a
fearful of what he intended to do to him now.

"So you're leaving," Ritt said, his Stetson h
instantly in his hands as Toye approached hi
bowing slightly with the identical courtesy
would bestow upon a beautiful woman.

"Yes . . . I am leaving," Toye answered hi
and his voice was distant and cold.

"Where to, pray may I ask?" Ritt muttered
half-smile going over his dark face, his thin bla
mustache curling like a pirate. He took hold
Toye's arm and helped him on deck.

"Anywhere . . . everywhere," Toye repli
"Just to get away from this wretched place.
have lost everything here, everything I have ev
wanted, so there is nothing to keep me."

"Meaning this Tioga?"

"Yes!" Toye cried bluntly, his eyes like mo
ten glass.

Ritt bowed his head, the morning breeze lif
ing several strands of his oily black hair.

"I didn't want to kill him," he murmured, hi
voice low, muffled. "But I had to. If he had live
you would have gone on with him, lying wit
him, tearing with your utter ruthlessness my
already lonely and ravaged heart. And I couldn'
let you go on doing this. I just couldn't."

"You didn't have to take his life," Toye spat, feeling all the agony of his death anew, as it would remain fresh on his mind and heart for years to follow. "You could have let him live. He was so utterly beautiful to me, the one real beautiful thing in my life. He . . . he was so filled with life, love, honesty. And I wanted these things, needed them so."

"I could have given them to you," said Ritt, as an old interest stirred, lighting up his eyes which were fixed on Toye's impending gaze. "If only he was not always there in the way; if only you had given me half a chance, which you never did. If you had given me half the attention you gave to that savage I think I would have kissed your feet. But you gave him everything. And you gave me nothing . . . absolutely nothing. That's why I killed him, because he had what I wanted most . . . you."

"Well, you have lost that chance forever now," Toye said to him, and with firmness, coldness in his voice. "If you had not taken Tioga's life I would have come to you, if for no other reason than to let him live. I loved him that much. But you cannot build happiness upon the unhappiness of others. I would think you should already know that . . . a man with your years and heartbreak. But I am leaving now, leaving Four-Mile-Branch, Jefferson, this damned outlaw territory, even you, and I'm never coming back."

He stopped talking and glared at Ritt who sto
there above him, cowed by his words, broken
last, on his knees before him, his heart torn a
bleeding. "So don't try and stop me, for I w
kill you if you do."

"I won't," Ritt said, his expression sa
ravished, his fine body stooped a little, bent
his own undoing. "I know I have hurt you, hu
you a lot, but if you will come back with m
back to High Afton I will make it all up to yo
. . . I swear it. I know I have been wrong, terrib
wrong but all that was because I loved you an
nothing else. A man becomes blind when he is
love, and when that love is thwarted he becom
both a blindman and a madman. I wasn't respo
sible for what I did, for my love for you steere
my hand, made me murder the thing which wa
taking you from me: your savage Tioga."

"Well . . . it's too late now, isn't it?" Toye sai
but without bitterness in his heart. He wa
merely stating a fact. "You can't bring bac
Tioga ever, can you, and I have no desire to liv
in the house with a man, share his bed, if he ha
deliberately taken the one thing in my life mos
precious to me." Then he said ironically, a twist
ed, bitter smile on his grief-stricken face. "So . .
you have ruined everything, haven't you . . . Rit
Cameo?"

Ritt gazed at him, a long sad look.

"Yes . . . I guess I have. But it was because I loved you that I did what I did."

Toye thought sadly for a moment—letting the past ride over him like a ghost with a long sword. Tioga had loved him, deeply. And his last words came to haunt him anew: "You are mine!"

It lent him the courage he needed, the courage it would take for him to turn and go, to walk out of Ritt's life, forever, though he sensed now how much Ritt had cared for him, had given up for him.

"Good-bye, Ritt," he managed to say, as he picked up his things again and started for his cabin.

"It's never good-bye," Ritt said, the tears streaming down his dark face, as Toye turned for the last time and looked at him. "No, Toye Bell. It's never good-bye. I'll follow you, to the end of the earth, if necessary. Someday I'll get you back."

THE END

MALE-ORIENTED NOVELS

$1.25 each—we pay postage when you order
any 4 for $5 or any 8 for $10

☐ HOLLYWOOD HOMO by Michael Starr
☐ BRAZEN IMAGE by Carl Corley
☐ GAY WHORE by Jack Love
☐ QUEER GUISE by Mark Dunn
☐ GAY CRUISE by Carl Driver
☐ A LOVER MOURNED by Carl Corley
☐ GAY SADIST by Mark Dunn
☐ QUEENSTOWN COURT by R. G. Mayzk
☐ TO WANT A BOY by Bert Schrader
☐ SKY EYES by Carl Corley

$1.00 EACH FOR THE FOLLOWING BOOKS
(including 5c postage)

☐ FALLEN EAGLE by Carl Corley
☐ FACES IN SECRET by Carl Corley
☐ MALE MODEL by Win Haven
☐ LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON by Dennis Drew
☐ MY SON, MY LOVER (anonymous)

☐ GAY TRILOGY, only $2 including postage
Three complete novels by Carl Corley
reprinted by popular demand—$3 value
I. MY PURPLE WINTER
II. SCARLET LANTERN
III. A FOOL'S ADVICE

free when you order
$5 worth of books from this page
☐ GAY THREE-WAY by Ed Culver

ORDER BLANK

SPECIALTY BOOK SERVICE
P.O. Box 3223
El Cajon, Calif. 92020

Please put me on your mailing list to r
FREE reviews of new books available at my de
each month. My order for books no longer o
newsstands is enclosed. I am over 21 years of age.

Name..

Address..

City...

State..

Zip Code...

(please print)

Amount enclosed for books checked on other

....

(Cash, check, or money order.)

☐ Please send me a free circular of male nudist m
zines and films.

eceive
ealer's
n the

....

....

......

....

....

side.

aga-

LITTLE BOY LAVENDER
THE MALE HUSTLER
EONE
Song of the Loom
Song of Aaron
The Making of a Homosexual

#568, $1.25

GREAT B

#419, $1.25

Send fo
free cat

Trojan
S

#545, $1.25

Trojan
you its
FREE! H
choose f
the item
coupon
day. We
catalogu

#487, $1.25

#538, $1.25

#542, $1.25

NUDIST M
PA

SPEC

Trojan Book Service, Box 2121-A, Ph

TROJAN BOOK SER

Please rush the items noted below:

☐#568 ☐#419 ☐#538 ☐#487

☐ Send all six books for just $7.00

☐ Please send your free catalogue.
(No purchase required.)

Box 2121-A, Phila., Pa. 19103

I have encl
Hand
5% tax, Pa.
T

MORE
OOKS!

r your
alogue
from
Book
ervice

Book Service offers
latest catalogue—
undreds of items to
rom . . . including
s at the left. Clip
below and mail to-
will rush your free
e of the finest in:

MAGAZINES
PERBACKS
MOVIES
IAL ITEMS

ila., Pa. 19103

RVICE

☐#542 ☐#545

sed $___.___
lling ___.25
Res. ___.___
otal $___.___

When young cowboy Toye Bell walked into the Golden Fleece Saloon he fell under the evil spell of cattle king Ritt Cameo, most ruthless man in the lawless strip between the Texas and Louisiana territories.